THE POETRY REVIEW

Volume 46
1955

The Poetry Society
London

Kraus Reprint
Nendeln, Liechtenstein
1969

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by
KRAUS REPRINT
A Division of
KRAUS-THOMSON ORGANIZATION LIMITED
Nendeln/Liechtenstein
1969
Printed in Germany
Lessingdruckerei Wiesbaden

'WHERE THERE IS NO VISION THE PEOPLE PERISH'

The Poetry Review

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TRADE AGENTS
The Rolls House Publishing Co
3 Breams Buildings
London E C 4

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ADVERTISING AGENTS
Aldridge Press Ltd
27 Chancery Lane
London W C 2

VOLUME XLVI · NUMBER I

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Next Issue:

More Poems and Prose of Distinction, and Final Announcement of our Twenty Pounds Prize Offer for an Essay on "Clarity versus Obscurity in Poetry".

TO MEMBERS AND FRIENDS: IF YOU CAN PLEASE BUY THE BOOKS THAT ARE PUBLISHED BY OUR ADVERTISERS YOU WILL BE GIVING HELP ALL ROUND

TO OUR WOULD-BE CONTRIBUTORS

*

1. All MSS must have the name and address of the author stated in the top left-hand corner of the first page. If he is a member of the Society a bracketed M should be added.
2. One side only of the paper must be used.
3. Reasonable margins and top space should be left.
4. A self-addressed envelope must always be enclosed either stamped or, if an overseas contributor, the Coupon-Response International. Otherwise, no MSS will be considered. Loose stamps cannot be regarded as a substitute. Except in rare instances an introductory letter is not necessary.
5. In their own interest writers should notice that poems over thirty lines in length have a very doubtful chance of acceptance.
6. If helpful editorial suggestions are made with a returned MS, please do not reply challenging the advice. Requests for criticism, moreover, are not invited. It should be remembered that The Poetry Society already has a well-organized service for expert advice, as announced in each issue.
7. Not more than four poems should be submitted at one time. Two is an ideal number.
8. The Editorial Board does not accept responsibility for the safe custody and return of any unsolicited MSS. Authors are requested not to write expressing anxiety lest their MS is lost in the post. MSS are seldom or never lost in the post.
9. Acceptance or rejection of a MS cannot reasonably be expected until at least three months have elapsed. A decision may take longer. Inquiries by telephone cannot be dealt with.
10. The receipt of a proof does not necessarily imply immediate publication.

THESE PAGES – AN OFFERING TO

Robert Graves

"With their saints and their dragons
On the screen of my teeming mind"

Prelude: WITHOUT BOASTING

Hilaire Belloc used to say in his essays, when his bragging was at its happiest: 'I speak without boasting'. And so do we, although at the beginning of a new volume of this journal, with a new cover and general 'lay-out' to match the New Year, nobody could blame us if we boasted in our turn even more happily. For our position in poetry is a unique one: *The Poetry Review* is the official publication of the oldest and indeed the leading organization of its kind in the world. The arts have suffered great hardships in recent times, especially that of literature, and yet The Poetry Society has still a four-figure membership. It is non-profit making, moreover, helped – so far – by no State subsidy, and all who are elected to its governing councils joyfully accept their task as a labour of love.

Again the Editorial Board send a New Year greeting from The Poetry Society to our readers and members at home and in many countries overseas, to Australia 'down under', and to Canada and America across the Atlantic. Also we salute the distinguished men and women whose interest in and practical enthusiasm for poetry and the Society have been expressed in many helpful directions during 1954. Their names mean news in the everyday world: and we are privileged to print them frequently in the pages both of *The Poetry Review* and our special magazine for junior members, *The Voice of Youth,* as well as in the seasonal programme of Friday Readings at Portman Square.

*

From the Poetry Society to the outer world of culture, indeed, is hardly a step nowadays, and it is becoming increasingly the habit with us, as we turn to this or that book or newspaper, this or that radio, television, or theatre programme, to recognize a member's name. Many, indeed, who belong to this Society are now contributing to various other activities of importance. Thus, Dame Sybil Thorndike is half-way through a successful series of plays and poetry recitals in

Australia; Miss Margaret Rawlings made her Sunday night readings for the B.B.C. so attractive last winter that in response to countless requests a new series of her 'Heartsease' half-hours are now being broadcast in the Light Programme, and Mrs. P. D. Cummins has become one of the favourite Television playwrights in the Children's Hour. There are also Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies, Moira Lister, A. E. Coppard . . .

Again, Mrs. Phoebe Hesketh and Miss Teresa Hooley have each broadcast a number of talks; Mr. Robert Armstrong is doing noble work on behalf of the National League of the Blind, several of his poems having been printed in Braille; some of our own poets, including F. Pratt Green, P. E. Dunn and Charles Higham, are in the latest P.E.N. anthology (to be reviewed at length in our next issue); and the Suffolk Centre has been asked to take charge of a commemoration of George Crabbe, who was born at Aldeburgh two hundred years ago.

As for the contribution the Society makes to the outside world through its incomparable Library, one of the finest treasuries of poetry in existence, it would amaze our readers, as it amazes the staff at 33 Portman Square who are kept busy by enquirers, how many learned societies, national newspapers, big business firms and private people seek the help and advice of our honorary Librarian, day after day, the whole year round! But that is another story; and Mr. Galloway Kyle has promised to write it in detail for a future number.

*

The appeal now being made by the Suffolk Group in memory of George Crabbe is for funds to establish a Poetry Prize Competition. It has yet to be seen whether the circumstance that Benjamin Britten's opera, *Peter Grimes*, was based on one of Crabbe's poems, will stimulate the ordinary reader's interest in the bicentenary. Always, of course, the far from ordinary reader has been attracted by his simplicity and actualism – Sir Walter Scott and Jane Austen especially. In a facetious letter to her sister the immortal 'Jane' avowed her readiness to become the second Mrs. Crabbe if the first could be got out of the way. She made a qualification, though, delightfully characteristic: 'But I do not undertake to be kind to her children, so she had better not leave any'.

*

On the 7th July, Guy Pertwee passed from us. Miss Lesley Crease writes: 'Ill-health had prevented him from taking an active part in the affairs of our Society for some time; but we remember his work for us with gratitude.

'During the war years he organized the Friday Poetry readings, and we recall some of the interesting personalities who came to us at that

time – Field-Marshal Lord Wavell, Desmond McCarthy, Hugh Walpole, Henry Ainley. As Chairman of the Executive Council he worked with unbounded energy, and was successful in extending the influence of the Society to new Centres throughout the British Isles. As a brilliant adjudicator and examiner for our Gold Medal, and as a reader of the poetry he loved so well, he was able to impart something of the spirit of joy in his work to teacher, student, and audience alike. Though he has gone from us that spirit remains.

'After many weary months of illness he spent a happy holiday with good friends in Somerset, accompanied by the faithful Miss Dwyer. He died suddenly the day before he was due to return to London. An invalid's life was not for him.

> No, at noonday in the bustle of man's work-time,
> Greet the unseen with a cheer!
> Bid him forward, breast and back as either should be,
> "Strive and thrive!" cry "Speed, – fight on, fare ever
> There as here!"'

A Guy Pertwee Memorial Recital will be held on 7th January, 7.45 p.m., Cowdray Hall, Henrietta Place, Cavendish Square, London, W.1.

*

We record with regret the death also of one of the earliest and once a most active member of The Poetry Society – Miss Sybil Bristowe.

Mr. Galloway Kyle writes: 'Miss Bristowe was the last survivor of a distinguished family, literary, scientific, and closely associated with the Baroness de Bertouch in the promotion of the Kensington Centre during the first World War – and very flourishing and influential it became. Miss Bristowe contributed a preface to The Lyceum Book of Verse, edited by Mollie Stanley-Wrench, and her own volume of poetry was the vintage of an acute, refined, precise mind.'

*

Just before his departure to the Australian summer as a follower of cricket, Mr. Neville Cardus, the distinguished writer on music, contributed to The *Manchester Guardian* in his 'Music Survey' series a critical essay entitled 'Revolt and Tradition'. *The Poetry Review* is privileged to reproduce the essay in this number by courtesy of Mr. Cardus and the Editor of The *Manchester Guardian*, and its significance for our readers will be appreciated if for Music they read Poetry.

*

Postscripts. – Mrs. Frances Harland was the winner of the Premium Competition announced in our last number. A 'technical hitch' caused her name to be given wrongly, and we apologize . . . The Arts Council of Great Britain: 1953–54 Subsidy to Opera, £347,000, Poetry Grants £2,305 17s. 2d. We like that seventeen and twopence . . .

THE EDITORIAL BOARD

FORTY-FIVE YEARS OLD

'NO, NOT OLD, BUT NEVER SO YOUNG'

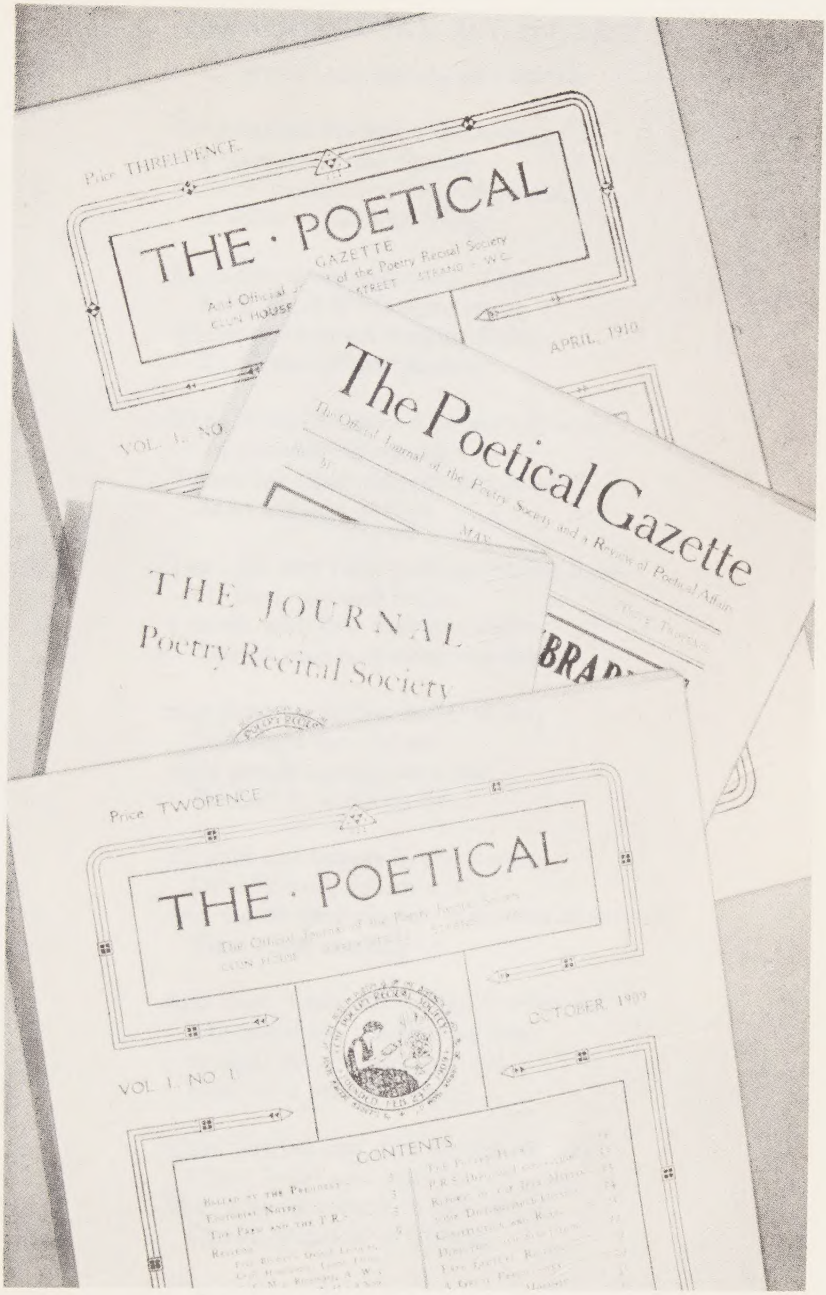
One of the original objects of The Poetry Society when it was founded in 1909 was to publish a journal. On the opposite page we reproduce four examples of this journal in its evolution from the beginning. The inaugural number, entitled *The Journal of The Poetry Recital Society,* was essentially a handbook and record, containing a report of the inauguration meeting, including the Presidential address by Lady Margaret Sackville.

The first issue of a regular quarterly bore the name *The Poetical.* It served the purpose of a gazette, so that when the late Marie Corelli, the novelist, proffered the advice that 'Gazette' might usefully be added to the title, her suggestion was adopted. *The Poetical Gazette* was published for a year as a supplement to *The Academy,* the literary weekly edited by Lord Alfred Douglas and T. W. H. Crosland, and when independent publication was resumed *The Poetical Gazette* became a sixpenny monthly; then, in turn, a bi-monthly with its present title, and eventually a quarterly.

Mr. Galloway Kyle, the first director of The Poetry Society who retired after thirty-eight years, has added a few details to this brief history. He recalls that, distinguished by the symbolical badge adopted as the seal of the Society, the first quarterly issue of the journal (*The Poetical*) included various resolutions comprising the approved draft of the Society's objects, which are in force to this day. In the Presidential address the vocal interpretation of poetry was emphasized as being 'vital to the realization of our primary purpose, the promotion, in the words of Matthew Arnold adopted as a motto, of "a clearer deeper sense of the best poetry and the strength and joy to be drawn from it".'

Suggestions and directions for the formation of Centres, or branches, designed to extend and make membership effective, were presented as a tremendous potentiality encouraged by the original modest annual subscription of five shillings, which ensured that the Society was not to be a profit-making concern. Mr. Kyle wonders whether any member possesses a copy of that compact 'handbook'. The Editorial Board owe the copy in our illustration to the generosity of a still active supporter of the Society who continues successfully to train candidates for its unique verse-speaking examinations.

The first poem in *The Poetical* was by Lady Margaret Sackville, who is with us to-day, her latest contribution having appeared in the October–December issue. An early number of *The Poetical Gazette* included a report of the first public dinner at which the descendants of great poets were gathered together with Lord Coleridge, the second President, in the chair. Other Presidents have included Viscount Wavell, Sir Johnston Forbes Robertson (the Society's first examiner in Verse), G. K. Chesterton, Lord Kennet, and T. W. Ramsey. Mr. Kyle, after forty-five years, finds himself looking back on those early days of high hopes, strenuous endeavour and fruitful achievement with 'wonder, astonishment, and pride'.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GAZETTE
APRIL, 1910
The Poetical Gazette
THE JOURNAL
Poetry Recital Society
Price TWOPENCE
THE · POETICAL
OCTOBER, 1909
VOL. I. NO. 1.
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SO SCEPTICAL MY HEART

WILLIAM KEAN SEYMOUR

So sceptical my heart these days:
I cannot feel the Spring
As once in childhood's glad amaze –
A wild, miraculous thing;

Each tree a wavering fan of light,
Each flood of birdsong spent
To lift my heart a singing flight
To worlds of wonderment.

Then, when I heard the caves resound
To thunderous waves, I stood
Trembling upon the echoing ground
As at the feet of God.

The hills and cliffs took monstrous form
Of lion, ape and bear;
I shook with fear that in a storm
They'd leap and crush me there.

But then, in shining hours so far,
So distant far, I'd see
Gold petals opened on a star
Bruised by a honey-bee.

I'd drift my fingers in the stream
Of willowed, mirrored sky
And watch grey shapes, disturbed in dream,
Turn silver darting by.

And once, when all the lights were out,
The starshine glimmering cool,
I thought myself a silver trout
Sunk in a midnight pool.

Child fancies, but they strung the days
When heart and mind could sing,
That now look back in sad amaze,
Grown sceptical of Spring.

ONCE SHE WAS LOVELY

LOUIS GOLDING

Once she was lovely.
You have seen
Birches when the wind was in them?
And you knew not they were trees
Or things holier than these.
You have heard from over the dells
Bells, or a faint sprite of bells
Making discord all sound else?
There were flowers about, you said,
But there were no flowers to see.
Was it a thought of them that went
Through the lands where they had been
And the thought was more than scent?

Once she was lovely, even she
She was a queen of knightly men.
All her beauty is a ghost.

Once she was lovely, even she.
She is lovelier now than then.

BEAUTIFUL CREATURES

WILFRID THORLEY

The lambs say 'Mirth!
Leap in all limbs that tread on earth.'

The foals say 'Sun!
Fill us that swift as light we run.'

The hawks say 'Sky!
Draw us up to the day's hot eye.'

The trees say 'Sap!
Rise, and with leafage fill God's lap.'

The rose says 'Dew!
Feed me and draw my red buds through.'

God give us words
As brave as bud's and beast's and bird's!

EVERY NIGHT AND ALL

NAOMI MITCHISON

Oxford, my heart-ache, the young go by
With the cares and pleasures that make their must,
Shouldering ghosts from street to street:
Among them I,
Casting the dust, casting the dust from my feet.

Oxford once lay in golden air.
Driven by health and knowledge and lust,
Time went by to a merry beat.
But I was there
Casting the dust, casting the dust from my feet.

Can we recall what force was spent
In all that delicate cut and thrust
Before we turned from the smiling cheat?
Before we went,
Casting the dust, the dust from reluctant feet.

Lord have mercy upon us.

For her lykewake nor proctor nor don.
Oxford from earth's thin crust
Dissolves into fire and fleet:
I will be gone
Casting the dust, casting the dust from my feet.

WINTER REVERIE

ADRIAN ARDEN

I will cover my heart as the winter covers the ground
With a hard frozen pact, a mantle of snow
And nothing can touch it, nothing break through
And all who tread thereon will find it hard and cold,
They will not feel what lies beneath
They will not know there throbs unceasingly
A wealth of springtime fresh and ever new
Like the gentle pulsing of waves at sea
Or the song of a thrush at dawn.

TELL SUMMER, AUTUMN

JOSEPH JOEL KEITH

Splash the Hawley hillside, Autumn.

Tell Autumn,
she with her buds bursted,
delicate pink
darkened, fallen;
her roses
blown bits and thorns only;
her bins bursting;
her fruits gathered;
her branches barren,
awaiting frost:
tell Summer you know an abundant glory.

Spill over the Hawley hillside, Autumn,
a growth not shown by Summer.
Profuse,
proclaim your sturdiness,
your brighter celebration:
carpet the slope with riotous goldenrod.

ORPHEUS

TOM WRIGHT

Light drove its golden wedge into the door
of hell and streamed in, jostling the lank
wraiths, raising blossoms from its rocky floor
and lush green grass from the black river's bank.
So Death was mocked in his own baiting ground
because a seeker never ceased to sing
and lit eternal darkness with the sound
that was the only true immortal thing.

Echoes of life, and thin remembrances
of flesh, stirred, like a long forgotten dream,
in the sad ghosts the errant song passed through
so long ago. Charmed into idleness,
old Charon rested by his charnel stream,
and trembled for a loss he never knew.

THREE POEMS

F. PRATT GREEN

AFTER READING A BOOK ON FERNS

FOR JOHN BETJEMAN

Say Tabitha lived here with her ferns,
off the High Street, in a cul-de-sac
into which heavy lorries would back,
darkening her raftered room, filling it
with echoing oaths too strange to shock
lonely Tabitha living with her ferns:
adiantum cuneatum gracillimum
nephrolepis exaltata hillsii
phyllitis scolopendrium crispum.

The sword-fern cascading from the stand
(her kittens would toy with it until
she tapped them), the hart's-tongue on the sill,
sturdiest of all, the mist-maidenhair
on the what-not, tremulous and still,
were ferns to her; to those who understand:
nephrolepis exaltata hillsii
phyllitis scolopendrium crispum
adiantum cuneatum gracillimum.

Say that she found a most subtle joy
in her green world. Quite ignorant of
the sublimations of luckless love,
she lightly dusted them with her breath,
marvelling how their fronded beauty throve,
having no need of Latin to enjoy
phyllitis scolopendrium crispum
adiantum cuneatum gracillimum
nephrolepis exaltata hillsii.

When they laid Tabitha in the ground
within sound of mattins and evensong,
they planted over her the hart's-tongue
(*phyllitis scolopendrium crispum*)
for its hardness; but the tender ferns
they heartlessly left to perish among
the garbage of a cat-infested ground
(*nephrolepis exaltata hillsii*
adiantum cuneatum gracillimum).

This, I fear, is a dark universe
for the luckless heart, the tender plant;
but it would be the most godless cant
to refuse to give thanks for the things
that have consoled us for a vain want.
Tabitha, help me to praise in my verse
adiantum cuneatum gracillimum
nephrolepis exaltata hillsii
phyllitis scolopendrium crispum.

YOU CAN'T TEACH THE HEART NOT TO STARE

When you are eight, and you are old enough
not to stare at a cripple, not to look back,
not to ask loud questions then and there,
we shall take you, they said, to see Jack,
poor Jack, they said, as they looked where
there was nothing to look at, and their lips
stopped talking, shutting up like mousetraps
because I was not old enough, I was there.

So when I was eight, and I was old enough
to feed spiders with flies, to feel fear
prickle the back of my neck, nobody near,
we must take you, they said, to see Jack,
poor Jack, they said, but be sure not to stare
at his right hand, if he kisses you forget
who it is, if he speaks to you answer back
politely, say it is a fine day or a wet.

The day was fine, with thunder in the air,
as we drove from the door with a whip-crack,
gee-up, whoa-there. Now you are old enough
we are taking you, they said, to see Jack,
poor Jack, they said, who sits in a chair
all day, all year, watching her, or asleep
like a child, and no use to her, bringing
nothing in, doing nothing to earn his keep.

We walked to a cottage, down a rutted lane
hedged with holly, wicked with nettles, sure
of finding him in, they said, because Jack,
poor Jack, has a sickness nobody can cure,

and whatever you do, they said, don't stare
at his right hand, but if he holds it out
take it, shake it politely, it won't bite,
and accept nothing, only an apple or pear.

When sunflowers glared at us over a fence
we are here, they said, stroking my hair
to comfort me, knowing Jack was asleep there
in the doorway, with his head lolling back,
and his right hand, small as a baby's, limp,
dangling, for a hand is nothing to fear
and more useful, they said, than a stump.
But you can't teach the heart not to stare.

He is eight, they said, he is old enough
not to stare, not to cry, as he gives Jack,
poor Jack, this golden sovereign, this pair
of boots, and a plaid for his wry shoulders,
and then we shall all have to hurry back . . .
(His bearded face, I had seen it somewhere!
O I was old enough not to tell my elders
who that moron was crucified in his chair!)

CARACTACUS

Caractacus is in our blood!
When he rebels against his lord
in shame of human servitude,

his unilateral decree
flutters no dove-cote in the dread
remote imperial chancelry,

and all his brave barbaric hordes
have no more hope, though nine years free,
than tumbling clowns with wooden swords;

yet such a grandeur lights the way
of sorrows the survivors tread
to grace a Roman holiday,

no greater dignity sustains
Caesar at his saluting-base
than proud Caractacus in chains.

THE APPLES OF LINCOLN'S INN*

ALUN LLEWELLYN

From Bosworth when the Tudor rode
to wear a thorn-won crown
that peace might be on men bestowed,
he saw by London Town
where men of peace had their abode,
the brethren of the Gown.
For them he built the windowed Hall
beam-roofed and buttressed well.
And where from the Gate-Tower's turret wall
the short noon-shadow fell
a costermonger set his stall
his apple-store to sell.

'Come all ye wise of Lincoln's Inn
whom sin can not deceive!
Come whence ye dine with minds akin
and all your graveness leave
to seek within an apple's skin
the sweets that tempted Eve.
Fresh are these fruits of Paradise,
russet and green and gold
in pippin livery, point-devise,
and for a penny sold.
Ye who are like the Serpent wise
buy, and as treasure hold.

It was not eating of the Fruit
that first made Adam sin
but thinking wisdom must refute
the grace he once was in;
for never serpent round the root
snared like the snake within.
In Eden then there grew the Tree
that we of Knowledge call.
Learn now, ye men of Equity,
the sagest law of all –
when wisdom seeks humility
Man has undone his Fall.'

* You can see the stall any day inside the sixteenth-century gate from Chancery Lane, and in the author's young days the tradition was still maintained.

At evening the flowers glow
in Lincoln's gardens set
and two and two the lawyers go
who have for table met
eating an apple each, to show
that they may not forget
how law can best its rule dispense
when justice speaks with ruth;
seeking again that garden whence
with spring woke Eden's youth,
to touch once more that innocence
which tasted first of truth.

TO HART CRANE

D. K. SINGER

You must have heard the alternating slam,
the clang-bong of the bells of past and now.
The freedom-wrinkled tongue between the beard
all bloody with the song of hope and man;
the symphony of searing steel against
the sky. White buildings by the bridge or past
it then where man will build the citadel
of rivets hot and love not cold like ore.

You must have heard the overwhelming crash
the sotting soldier makes when dead upon
the floor. Empty of life, not like the wind
that sang its songs among the fingers of
the Keys, but as the past . . . the books long lost
between Pygmalion and the pounding surf.

You must have heard the nudging dirge, the love-
less surge the sea sang on the Gulf that day.
The wrinkled spasms of the sea like old
and hungry faces yearning for a home
upon the shore . . . the shore, the love, no more.

You must have felt the secret slip between
the drowning discs of past and now and lay
revealed upon the ocean floor alone.
Quivering there. Resonant there. Home there.

THE MASTERPIECE

LOIS VAUGHAN THOMAS

The artist frowned; his paintings he surveyed
From floor to ceiling awesomely displayed –
Blue peacock plumes, red orchids speckled bright,
Proud lions, tigers, yellow eyes alight.

"Surely they satisfy the strictest norm –
Subtle their tone, significant their form.
Yet something still they lack" – and with a sigh
He cleaned his palette for another try.

A trio of white petal-wings he drew
With underskirt green-frilled of darker hue,
Sprung from a knob – the whole of simple line,
Pure spirit wedded to supreme design.

The artist smiled; back in his chair he leant.
God, having wrought his snowdrop, was content.

WITCHES' SABBATH

MARGARET HOPE

Quick flicker of bat-wings' flutter;
Low lift of the Hunter's Moon;
Weird call of the waiting screech-owl –
Spin the slow spell, chant the rune!

Black puss stirs, and yawns, and stretches;
Grey puss rouses from day-long doze;
Broomstick rattles in chimney-corner;
Evil-pregnant darkness grows.

Gather, eldritch sisters, gather!
Honour our Satanic Father
With excess of revelry,
Riot, dance and devilry!
Mop and mow and furious antic,
Yells unearthly, capers frantic,
Wild abandon, mirth unbounded,

Witch by witches madly hounded!
Till the rooster's hateful cry
Rings across the death-pale sky.

Flee the light! and seek asylum
From the searching radiance then,
Where the darkness lingers longest –
In the shadowy minds of men!

AUTUMN COLLOQUY

ALAN SMITHIES

Happy the heartfast child-in-man who seeks
God in a garden suburb, talking tidily
Among the tied chrysanthemums, while idly
Wax roses smile of summer, and the weeks

Decline in misted eyes and fretful tears
Toward that winter walk out of the sap
And sheer springlift of living. From the lap
Of fertile trees, to held and hardening fears

Of frosts, and all the sterile spider-touch
That gives decay its tenuous grace, its look
of past perfection in a faded book
Is now one leap into the lost, one clutch.

Within some distant ice-age in the mind
A poet spreads his patient nets, and waits
For river-thaw . . . Still God, at garden-gates
Of suburbs, holds the heartfast man behind,

In clothcapped conversation under clouds
With talk of tools and rules, the ordered chart
And compost chemics of his careful art,
And science of small deaths beneath the shrouds

Of shrivelling sallows. All the shallow reasons,
Raked over, sing. The heartfast man achieves
Such surface serenity, while his mind conceives
The blue-print borders of time's safer seasons.

FLOWERS IN MOONLIGHT

ODETTE TCHERNINE

When high-noon sunshine robes the flower-beds
In vibrant haze of gold, and perfumed air,
Each flower knows its place, sweet wildness of
The dahlia burns in shaggy, vivid flare
Of glowing life, and rose in bloom distils
The scent of love songs by dark window-sills.

But when night's curtain dims the garden hedge,
And glow-worm glitters by the dewy sedge,
The white moon rides, and throws an eerie veil
On every flower, so a different tale
Is told by whispering, velvet rose forlorn
In summer's dying, and the last display,
While lilies of the field are shimmering stars,
Fragile, transmuted faces, once so gay:
Yet who would change this transient silver-grey
Of moonbright garden for the blatant day?

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES *

(An English Tribute)

ARKELL SHAW

The folks he made so vivid to our sight:
John, Iris, Little Boston, Schoolmistress
and others, drawn with humour's kindliness
to human traits and failings, still delight.

Ripe wit and fruitful musings focus light
on Life, Arts, Letters, Science, with largesse
endearing him to all who sense and bless
his full round arc of culture, clear and bright.

In tropic lands, where men may hope in vain
to meet with lettered friends – so many find
in poker, hooch, loose ties, enough to please! –

I treasured, vital values to retain,
New England's Trilogy, that called to mind
Old England culture, as I browsed at ease.

* Oliver Wendell Holmes died sixty years ago on the 7th October, 1894.

THE POETRY OF CHARLOTTE BRONTË

MARION TROUGHTON

The last day of March is the centenary of Charlotte Brontë's death. Although she is chiefly remembered as a novelist, Charlotte wrote much poetry, especially in her early years. But as a poet, she lacked the fire and imagination she displayed in prose. Her poems are definitely not in the same class as those of her sister Emily, yet the study of them affords some insight into the mind of this famous nineteenth-century author.

In his lecture 'The Practice of Writing' Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch advises all literary aspirants to practise writing poetry. The Brontë family did this. Even when they were small they preferred writing to playing games. And their writing habits, fortunately for literature, continued into their adult life. In 1836 the twenty-years-old Charlotte sent some poems to Southey, the Poet Laureate. After a long delay, due partly to his absence from home, he replied:

'You evidently possess and in no inconsiderable degree what Wordsworth calls "the faculty of verse". I am not depreciating it when I say that in these times it is not rare. Many volumes of poems are now published every year without attracting public attention, any of which, if it had appeared half a century ago, would have obtained a high reputation for its author. Whosoever, therefore, is ambitious of distinction in this way ought to be prepared for disappointment.'

Southey's prophecy certainly proved true ten years later when the Brontë sisters published their book of poems. This decision was reached after Charlotte had been impressed by some of Emily's poems which she read without her sister knowing. Anne volunteered her own poems for Charlotte to read. The outcome, as everyone knows, was that the three sisters in the lonely moorland parsonage decided to publish a selection of poems at their own expense and under the names of Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell. The book appeared in May and among the many reviews was this: 'They in whose hearts are chords strung by Nature to sympathize with the beautiful and the true will recognize in these compositions the presence of more genius than it was supposed this utilitarian age had devoted to the loftiest exercises of the intellect.'

But in spite of generous reviewing only two copies of the poems were sold. One, however, was bought by a man who went so far as to ask the publisher to obtain autographs of the authors for him. Years later when Emily and Anne were dead and Charlotte was a famous novelist, she sent a copy of the poems to Mrs. Gaskell, accompanied by the following:

'The little book of rhymes was sent by way of fulfilling a rashly-made promise, and the promise was made to prevent you from

throwing away four shillings in an injudicious purchase. I do not like my own share of the work, nor care that it should be read: Ellis Bell's I think good and vigorous and Acton's have the merit of truth and simplicity. Mine are chiefly juvenile products; the restless effervescence of a mind that would not be still. In those days the sea too often "wrought and was tempestuous" and weed, sand, shingle – all turned up in the tumult.'

Charlotte was correct about her poems. They are chiefly juvenile, written before tragedy descended on the family. Yet they had some merit, otherwise they would not have impressed Southey and de Quincey. And Charles Kingsley wrote to Mrs. Gaskell after her *Life of Charlotte Brontë* was published: '– I shall now read carefully and lovingly every word she has written, especially those poems, which ought not to have fallen dead as they did, and which seem to be (from a review in the current Fraser) of remarkable strength and purity.'

Few critics would agree with Kingsley, yet without doubt Charlotte's verse-writing helped in her use of the English language. The fact was that in 1846 she had not found herself as a writer. For many years poetry-reading had been a main recreation, as letters to her friends reveal. 'If you like poetry,' she wrote to Ellen Nussey, 'let it be first-class, Milton, Shakespeare, Thompson, Goldsmith, Pope (if you will, though I don't admire him) Scott, Byron, Campbell, Wordsworth and Southey.'

Charlotte was certainly qualified to judge poetry if study of it provided such qualification. She had no illusions about herself as a poet. But what is the verdict on her verse one hundred years later? In that unlucky volume which the three sisters published so hopefully, her own contribution consisted of nineteen poems including 'Pilate's Wife's Dream', 'Life', 'The Letter', 'Preference' and 'Evening Solace'. After her death other poems were published for the first time in magazines. *The Cornhill Magazine* printed 'Watching and Wishing' in December, 1860, and 'When Thou Sleepest' in August, 1861.

But it was not until 1923 that many of her poems, written in youth and early womanhood, were first published. *The Complete Poems of Charlotte Brontë,* edited by Clement Shorter, with a bibliography and notes by C. W. Hatfield, was issued by Hodder and Stoughton. They included 'The Vision', 'Reflection', 'Vespers' and 'The Song of the Fairies', which formed part of a story Charlotte wrote in 1829. But she had not the depth of quality so necessary in verse-writing. Her rhyming is mechanical, and she often chose themes which were alien to her upbringing and experience. A modern critic has said that 'a poet must see, think and feel, he must express what he sees, thinks and feels accurately'. Charlotte did not always succeed in doing this.

Earlier, Wordsworth wrote: 'Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings – it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity.' The verses she wrote after the death of her sisters and those about her experiences in Belgium were certainly the outcome of powerful feelings, but can they be classed as good poetry?

'Master and Pupil' written in Brussels in 1843, certainly gives us an insight into the relationship between Charlotte and M. Hegar. He is the 'Master' of the poem, and she disguises herself as Jane. In some ways, this poem with its four-line stanzas is the forerunner of Charlotte's novel *Villette*, for in the novel Lucy Snowe finds that M. Paul Emmanuel expects much from her in the way of intellectual effort. In fact the 'Master' of the poem can be called the prototype of M. Paul and of course M. Hegar. In 'Reason' we are given a glimpse into the depth of feeling when Charlotte's love for M. Hegar was unrequited.

Many of the other poems are dull, especially her historical ones. They do not soar, and they are not illuminating to the reader; although occasionally there are signs of strong talent forcing its way through the mass of words, for most of Charlotte's poems are introspective, lacking the simplicity and sincerity so necessary in poetry. But 'Pilate's Wife's Dream', a long poem of twenty-six verses, has a stanza beginning:

> The world advances: Greek and Roman rite
> Suffices not the inquiring mind to stay.
> The searching soul demands a purer light
> To guide it on its upward, onward way –

And 'Life' is one of her happiest pieces. 'Retrospection', written when she was nineteen, is another of her poems which merits our reading, for it seems to foreshadow the all-too-brief life of each of those three sisters, Emily, Charlotte, and Anne.

CAN WE HELP YOU?

The answer is Yes to any Member who is anxious for the best advice about his or her work. The Poetry Society established a CRITICAL SERVICE some years ago, and writers are invited to make use of it.

Two poems may be submitted for criticism and help, for a minimum fee of 5s. The Charge for the criticism of each additional poem (under 100 lines) is 2s. It is particularly requested that all poems submitted should be typed and that a stamped addressed envelope be enclosed.

BORN BETWEEN THE WHEELS

PHOEBE HESKETH

Above the twisted and tormented trees
That wrestle with relentless winds of life,
The old impassive moon defies the world
With a symbol of the changelessness in change.
The seasons turn their timeless wheels in space
While we, who think to ride the permanent way
Confined in ordered tracks, draw down the blind
On fenceless fields that stretch beyond the mind.
For man, conforming to his self of clay,
Is moulded into ruts by the machine.

The slave machine
Crushes incentive by its steel demands
And thwarts the purpose of creative hands.
Subservient wheels designed
To smooth man's labour, stun the searching mind
With iron obligation, printed thought –
His brain is bought by superficial power.
Through shifts and strikes and sections, hour by hour
His clockwork heart beats time.
Concerned with parts, he cannot grasp the whole;
Eyes focused on a thread, how can he see
The patterned fabric of a destiny?
The obedient machine
Has bred the man who dares not be alone;
It cultivates the instinct of the swarm
In a crowded world too small for solitude.

The slave machine now orders man
And drives its wheels across his brain;
Its powers are measured out to span
His own and take the sweat and strain
Of sinew for the subtler pain
Of repetition hammered down
Each mindless day the same, the same.
Originality, the clown
Whose cartwheels turn the clockwork lame,
Earns nothing but a laughing scorn
In this subhuman game.

The slave machine that winds the clock
Until each hour strikes too soon
And leaves the vacant hours to mock
Resourceless hands when work is done,
Makes man its dupe, unmaking time –
This constant infidelity
Must drill the reason out of rhyme
And comfort from eternity.

Where is the old rush-gatherer, beside what stream
Bend the grey willows as he passes by?
Which way has the ploughman gone with his patient team?
And who is the man who reads the earth and sky
Beyond a factory window? A broken dream
Startles the weaver as the shuttles fly
Backward to where the ancient ghost of a loom
Breed thoughtful patterns in a quiet room.
While down by the lonely river the wind and rain
Treadle the water-wheel that drips through ferns
And half-turns into silence . . .

And all the friendly tools that warmed and grew
To individual ownership are gone;
The scythe, the flail, the rough and homely grindstone
Are cumbrous relics in the town museum.
Man once revered his bond with wood and stone
And shaped them with his thinking blood and bone.
He knew a father's tenderness in touching
The cloth, the cup, the cradle of his making,
But has no kinship with the products shaken
From out the inexhaustible machine –
This mindless Vulcan hammers work and worker
Into a hall-marked pattern.

Now wood-pulp serves for cloth, synthetic clothes
Adorn shop-windows in a flash display;
And cakes are bulged with artificial cream –
The Age of Substitutes is called *To-day!*

A generation torn from maternal earth
And born between the wheels can never know
The slow green pulse that beats through natural birth.
This breed evolved from out its own inventions,

This high-pitched, tense and nightmare tight-rope walker
No longer hears the starlings on his roof-top
But moves in crowds and feeds at marble counters,
While bastard palaces of glass and chromium
Supply a need for sensual satisfaction.

Penny-in-the-slot; the turnstile clicks
An entry into plywood-built Arcadia –
Casinos glistening like sugar-icing
Appease his soul with minarets of plastic,
Neurotic dance-bands wailing wanton music,
Distorted art, menageries, and fairgrounds,
Cheap thrills at one and sixpence every minute
Express the limit of a snap enjoyment.

But still the infinitely wise Designer
Binds round the breaking spirit in His mercy,
And gives it pause beyond the tin-pan alley . . .

In the moment when the turning wheels are still
And man is plunged in a silent world alone,
He'll find the field that claims him for its own –
Here is the cradle for our strength, the cloth
That warms our faith beyond all fear of cold;
And in the rounded cup of earth and sun
(Not made but breathed into our hands) we hold
The Word made flesh, the threefold life in one.

SYMBOLS

DIANA SHELLEY

God spake from the burning bush
Incandescent with bright flame,
Golden with the pollen dust:
'Awful and holy is my Name.'

God spake from the lonely tree
Naked, stripped in bitter shame,
Writhen limbs in agony:
'Cursed and shameful is my Name.'

God spake from the sudden flower
Swift from the tomb of night it came:
'Incomprehensible is my Power,
Simple and lovely is my Name!'

AUTUMN REST

MARGARET HOPE

Here on a hillside, half-way up to Heaven,
I lie and rest awhile; the morning sun
Drying my dew-wet shoes. Among the bracken
Small rabbits run.

The country smiles, at rest. The summer's work
Of tending and of garnering, is done;
And the long winter, well provided for,
Not yet begun.

So, when the storms and strains of youth are over,
The difficult balance found, the values clear,
In quietude and faith I humbly render
Thanksgiving here.

THE MOTH

KATHLEEN VALMAI RICHARDSON

A stroking finger wounds the dust,
And this is death.
This pale dry pepper smear is wing
That never knew the sun but parted night
Without a whisper, seeking darker air;
Or, lured by musk,
The petal holding up a languid palm
That bruises easily as the proboscis
Dipping nectar does.

What then impelled you to the child's bright hair?
An itch your furry toe felt
To tread patterns on the rough gold cable?
Or the soapy scent of innocence,
To you, the odalisque,
Exotic?

So,
The hand that we thought petal-like
Has mauled you
And his pitying finger sheared your scales away
Until your dusty blood was spent.
You had no armament,
Not so much as a cry;
Thus, a bewildered child has learned
That he is destiny.

PSYCHE?

A. E. COPPARD

Flower of the dawn,
  Of purpose unknown,
Sole spirit, divergent,
  Wandering alone,

Under what sea,
  Into what sky,
Deep in what forest,
  Where do you hie?

From wind and from wave
  I hear your call,
You glance an eye
  O'er the starry wall;

The night pool reflects you –
  You rest not there;
What heaven protects you
  From our despair?

You drowse in bright valleys,
  Or dream on a hill
In measureless moonlight
  Prone and most still.

Day's secret by night,
  Night's secret by day –
What art may define you?
  What wisdom convey?

Shade of all shadows,
  Sly wink to the blind,
Beam to the eyeless
  Eclipsed and confined;

Whose is that savour
  Enticing the bee?
Who beats the gong
  In the mulberry tree?

'For Music read Poetry' *

REVOLT AND TRADITION

NEVILLE CARDUS

The recent concerts of contemporary German music, heard in the Third Programme, reveal an even more acute state of disintegration and indecision than is perceptible in composition to-day everywhere. At any cost young composers seem determined to prove they are contemporary; 'if there's no future for us,' we can imagine them saying, 'then let us at least live in the present – and for heaven's sake let us forget the past'. To echo romantic cadences or harmony is, apparently, to lapse into barbarism. The ironical fact pointed out by history is that the great composers have seldom paid tribute to the Time Spirit, have gone their ways indifferent to the ideologies of the hour, have not worried at the threat that the latest young critic might regard a work as likely to 'date'. There is no hint of the contemporary scene in Mozart, for example: no matter what may be said of the 'Figaro' of Beaumarchais and its relation to or reflection of the French Revolution, Mozart's music, like all his music – 'Don Giovanni', 'Cosi', the symphonies, the G minor Quintet – is as indifferent to the demands of the Zeitgeist as are the novels of Jane Austen. The hints of a later and more tragic harmony sounded in 'Don Giovanni', a music which foreshadows the creative disruption which was Beethoven's most seminal contribution, had nothing to do with ideologies, or the ebb and flow of external events; they came from an inevitable and strictly musical development, the consequence of the evolution of traditional forms acting and reacting to musical genius working from within, from its own coil of imagination. Wagner, a revolutionary in his day compared with whom Berg and Hindemith and Schönberg must be regarded as timid bourgeoisie, tentatively dipping cold feet into the advancing tides, Wagner for all his theories of the 'Art Work of the Future', the 'Zukunftsmusik', based his masterpieces on myth, his idea being that music can deal, in opera, only with broad types of human nature and emotion and consciousness, not with circumstances and conceptions needing historical context and explanation. Beethoven himself, the iconoclast who was the real cause of all the wrath to come, composed out of a spiritual belief. If he did begin a symphony, not with a melody but with a knocking at the door as forbidding as the knocking in *Macbeth*, he was always willing to turn his vision inward and compose tunes which are only more seriously grounded in tone and feeling than Haydn's because he was the more serious man of the

* See Prelude, page 5. Acknowledgements to The *Manchester Guardian* and Neville Cardus, Esq.

two. But overmuch is made of the Promethean Beethoven; he wrote as a full man, with humour, geniality, and solemnity in proportion. There is no symphony in existence that honours pure musical art more proudly and strictly than the 'Pastoral' symphony.

The critics nowadays make a terrible fuss if they think a work of art is 'dated'. You will hear them, any Sunday morning, talking Ibsen out of existence because in 1954 the departure from the house of the next Nora is no longer of much economic or dramatic significance, and certainly not an event in the theatre calling for a portentous banging of a door. But in the world of imagination nothing dates; we might as well object to the ghost in *Hamlet* as to the exit of Nora on grounds of topical 'truth'. If any play, by Ibsen or anybody else, possesses imaginative power of conviction time and space cannot touch it; it is the most prosaic sort of criticism that condemns a work of art mainly because it continues to hold the mirror up to a period. In music it is not of course easy to point out where a composition is dating; for music cannot really express or convey ideologies or concepts capable of verbal contradiction or approval. Yet there has been an attempt to render a mode of feeling obsolete for the purposes of composition; at any rate quite a number of anti-romantic critics are satisfied that romanticism is a form of outmoded emotional expression. Certain styles, certain technical formulae, become in time associated with certain ways of conveying modes of artistic feeling and conception. Every classic, said Stendhal, was a romantic in his day. The danger in all the arts at the present time is the label, the fashion, the drive of the self-conscious schools (for never has the creative artist been rendered by events as self-conscious of his processes as to-day). The critics praise and damn from contemporary and often aesthetically irrelevant points of view. It is the 'psychology', the 'pathology', the 'criticism of life' that make Alban Berg's 'Wozzek' fashionable in post-Freudian circles; the fact is overlooked that Berg's music at its best is as firmly rooted in the soil or soils of the romantic Mahler, Wagner, and Schönberg, as Wagner was rooted in Weber. Only the second-rate composers have had time to pick and choose their ways of expression or their subject-matter; only the second-rate composers have been so free from the sway of tradition as to go to work saying in advance: 'I shall react against romanticism, avoid excessive chromaticism, and take care I don't fall under the influence of a dated school or subject-matter!' The proper genius is in the possession of his daemon – and the daemon usually breathes the informing fires of tradition. No composer so far has preoccupied himself with 'new forms', 'new idioms', and at the same time given the world a masterpiece. John Sebastian was the old fogy; Phillip Emanuel was the innovator who appealed to the avant-garde!

Obviously the language of music must change with the everlasting unravelling of the stuff of consciousness. The critics will be the last to discover the music that achieves the next integration, and relates to basic continuous growth the new shoots and plants from the fundamental earth-tone. And the less of a rational critic the composer is himself the better for his powers of inspiration. The truly great man will find himself standing apart the more he remains with his forebears.

HAUNTED

ELISABETH AYRTON

I see ghosts in your eyes
That will haunt me for ever;
They crowd in your star-struck gaze
Looking out at me:
And behind them you are intact;
Whole and alone; unhaunted.

I watched you to-night
Coming to meet me,
Alone down the quiet street,
As I have seen you many times before.
I saw your outline blurred
And all your colours pale,
Dissolving.

I am tired, you said,
And it was a tiredness of departure;
Something was gone from you
And lost to me:
And stood, a ghost, between us.

I shall see you again
Coming to meet me, firm and bright,
The little street all dimmed
By your life and purpose;
I shall stretch out my hand
And touch and hold you,
And yet untouchable, you change;
And in the end
I shall be haunted for ever by your eyes with the ghosts in them.

FROM THE RUSSIAN

(Alexander Blok *pre-Revolution*)

ROBIN KEMBALL

I

There, in the dusk of the cathedral,
The ikons from the lamplight rise.
The living night looks quickly, heedful,
Into your deep, unsleeping eyes.

In words of fair celestial wisdom
Earth's currents make their presence known.
There, in the arches – twilight hidden
In mystery. Here – cold seats of stone.

The fervour of our chance encounter
Breathes down from the cathedral towers
Upon these candles' dreamy slumber,
Upon the ikons and the flowers.

And all is silence – inspiration,
And your thoughts lie concealed above,
And dimly, then, comes revelation,
The serpent trembles, and the dove.

II

A young girl stood in a church choir, singing
Of the weary travellers far from home,
Of all the ships that sailed on the ocean,
Of all whose joys were long since gone.

Her voice flew clear to the cupola upward,
A sunbeam shone on her shoulder white,
And those in the darkness looked and listened –
A white dress sang in a beam of light . . .

To all it seemed as if joy were approaching,
The ships all safe in a sheltered bay,
A life of radiant beauty dawning
For the weary travellers far away.

Her voice sang sweetly, the beam shone finely,
And only above, by the Altar Screen,
A child wept softly – knew from the Mysteries
None would ever return again.

FROM OLD HUNGARY

(Andrew Ady, 1877–1919)

GODFREY TURTON

I

Yesterday autumn into Paris crept,
Gliding along the boulevard soundlessly
In August through the hushed leaves of the trees,
And there met me.

Towards the Seine I strolled, kindling to fire
Some little sparks of song under my breath,
Wraithlike, fantastical, encrimsoned, sad;
Their subject death.

As autumn came and whispered in my ear,
Through the hum of the Boulevard Saint-Michel
A shiver ran, and fluttering to the street
Leaves mocking fell.

Just for a moment summer seemed to start;
Then with a laugh from Paris autumn fled.
It came, and that it came I only know
Who heard the rustle overhead.

II

Tip-tap, on the dark staircase! Is it she
Who comes so softly, shyly to my room?
Hope grips my heart. With growing certainty
I wait enraptured in the autumn gloom.

Tip-tap! Again my heart leaps, and again
I listen with a deep, a mounting thrill
To the slow, secret, rhythmical refrain
As if of someone coming, coming still.

Tip-tap, tip-tap! Hollow upon my ear
The echoes of the autumn evening fall,
Muffled in fog. No one is coming here,
No one is coming, nobody at all.

EDWARD THOMAS – MIRROR OF ENGLAND

JOHN VINCENT WILSON

On Shoulder of Mutton Hill, overlooking the village of Steep in Hampshire, there stands a single boulder of Sarsen stone – a simple memorial to Edward Thomas. More than once in recent years – indeed, in recent months, vandals have mutilated this memorial, trying to wrench away the bronze plate which records the love of the poet for this spot. Can it be that this Welsh poet, who loved and interpreted England as few of her sons have done, is really forgotten?

It is true that most anthologies contain one, or perhaps two, of his poems, but what do most of us know or remember of the man and his work? The dictum of Plautus, quoted by Byron in 'Don Juan', that 'Whom the gods love die young' has more than a little truth about it when we remember the poets taken from us in the two major wars of this century. The reputation of some is more firmly established than that of others. It is not hard for young people of to-day to think of Rupert Brooke as their contemporary. Yet when we pass the house where he was born, in the shadow of Rugby School, the plaque on the wall reminds us that it was sixty-five years ago – and Brooke has been dead for more than half that time!

Brooke needs no eulogy. His name is assured for posterity by the popular appeal of his poems, and by the forthright defence of his friends (see, for instance, what Sir John Squire says of his detractors in *The Honeysuckle and the Bee*). Edward Thomas has perhaps less immediate popular appeal, and, while his work is not so well known, is a poet of much greater stature.

He was born in Wales in 1878. But dates are indeterminate things for most of us. We may mark the milestone of Thomas by noting that if he were with us to-day, he would be the same age as our present Poet Laureate, seventy-four, and eight years younger than Hilaire Belloc was. Had he lived, he might well have been Laureate himself, although it is doubtful whether he would have wanted the honour – does any man?

We see men best through the eyes of their contemporaries – when they are loved. And Thomas was loved. We have the two short memoirs by his wife, Helen Thomas, *As It Was* and *World Without End*. But there were others, and if we have never heard of Edward Thomas before, we may be surprised at the way in which his friends regarded him. No other death, among the many in that tragic time – not even that of Rupert Brooke, made such an impression on his fellow-writers. No other man left such a memory behind.

There is, for instance, the record of just one evening which Thomas and his wife shared with other poets, their friends, at the home of Wilfrid

Gibson. Gibson paints the picture of them all – Rupert Brooke, Lascelles Abercrombie and his wife, Robert Frost and Edward Thomas and their wives, in his poem, 'The Golden Room', and then goes on –

'Twas in July
Of nineteen-fourteen that we sat and talked;
Then August brought the war, and scattered us.

Now, on the crest of an Aegean isle,
Brooke sleeps, and dreams of England; Thomas lies
'Neath Vimy Ridge, where he, among his fellows,
Died, just as life had touched his lips to song.

As Edward Thomas was loved by the friends of his youth, so his poetry is loved and praised by discerning critics of to-day. In the judgement of Dr. Leavis, he was 'a very original poet who devoted great technical subtlety to the expression of a distinctive modern sensibility. His . . . poems seem to happen. It is only when the complete effect has been registered in the reader's mind that the inevitability and the exquisite economy become apparent.' Always in the poems there is this quality. The words are exactly the right ones and never one too many. The voice is quiet, but it is the authentic voice of Nature and the human spirit. 'It is,' writes Norman Nicholson, 'an art not appreciated by the average reader, who tends to admire verse where the emotion written about is greater than the emotion felt,' and the note is characteristic of the one poem by Edward Thomas which most of us know – 'Adlestrop', which finds its way into most anthologies:

Yes, I remember Adlestrop –
The name, because one afternoon
Of heat, the express-train drew up there
Unwontedly. It was late June.

The steam hissed. Someone cleared his throat.
No one left and no one came
On the bare platform. What I saw
Was Adlestrop – only the name.

And willows, willow-herb, and grass,
And meadowsweet, and haycocks dry,
No whit less still and lonely fair
Than the high cloudlets in the sky.

And for that minute a blackbird sang
Close by, and round him, mistier,
Farther and farther, all the birds
Of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.

The experience is one which has come to most of us at some time; but who has evoked the very atmosphere, the sense of seeing what we are reading, as Thomas does? This is a feature of all his work, both in

prose and verse. When he tells us what he sees, we realize that we have been seeing just that all the time without knowing it. That great poet and man of letters, Walter de la Mare, declares in the introduction to the collected edition of Thomas's poems that when Edward Thomas was killed in Flanders 'a mirror of England was shattered of so pure and true a crystal that a clearer and tenderer reflection of it can be found no where other than in these poems.'

In a number of them there may be traced a voice that reminds us of Housman, but Thomas's work is clothed where Housman's is bare – definite instead of vague. Materialist he is in his habit of thought, but a materialist honest enough to reject the pattern of civilization which a materialist world produced. When Thomas returns to Nature – and Nature was his first love – it is to the Nature of Richard Jeffries, whom he acknowledged as master. He may not find morality in her, but he does not discover despair. Hear the ending of 'The Chalk-Pit':

> Here, in fact, is nothing at all
> Except a silent place that once rang loud,
> And trees and us – imperfect friends, we men
> And trees since time began; and nevertheless
> Between us still we breed a mystery.

Yet always Edward Thomas is *himself*. It is natural that we should notice marks of kinship, for poets, no more than other men, are not born in a vacuum. Thomas is not just an echo of past or his own present; he writes for all time in the present that belongs to us all.

Thomas was able to reflect the English scene so perfectly, because he had a clear eye, as well as a sensitive mind and a controlled heart. His observation is accurate, scientific, inevitable. Whether he writes of Swede turnips, faggots, bird's nests, sedge-warblers, cock-crow, October, November, roads – all are part of the English scene, faithfully presented – things as they are. There is no 'Celtic twilight', no sentimentalizing. The mind of Thomas was as accurate as a camera, but a camera in the hands of an artist.

Words for him were treasures to be handled carefully, as a man holds in his hand the things that he loves:

> Out of us all
> That make rhymes,
> Will you choose
> Sometimes –
> As the winds use
> A crack in a wall
> Or a drain,
> Their joy or their pain
> To whistle through –
> Choose me,
> You English words?

He had learned to use words in the hard school of journalism, for while we think of Thomas as a poet, his first published poem is dated 1915, and he had been a writer for years before that time. Our picture of him and the poetic quality of his prose writing is completed in a passage from a chapter called 'Garland Day' in *The Heart of England*, first published in 1906 – note that it is one complex, sustained sentence:

And yonder is the wide prospect again, and the dawn – the green hedges starred with white stitchwort flower, misty with the first hawthorn clusters, a-flutter with whitethroat, wild with the warbling of the blackcap in their depths; wide, lustrous meadows dimmed by cuckoo-flowers, and at the edges of them the oaks beginning to bud and their branches like great black brands about to break into golden flame; and about the oaks that stood in the midst of them the grass waving in the sun like brooks plunging from their roots; farmhouse known only by their encircling apple trees all in bloom; radiant pools where the sandpiper laughed; woods where the oak and ash waded deep in the translucent green of the undergrowth's rising tide and even then glowed with brown and unborn greens, and the nightingale sang far withdrawn, and at the edge the hurdlemaker worked by his thatched cote; and ridge beyond ridge of hills cloudily wooded; and over all the low sky like a blue bowl just emptied of its cream.

DESERTED ARENA

DOUGLAS MANT

Only the sky, and tiny, living things
That scuttle down among the broken stones
To search for food. What great imaginings
Lie in this lifeless dust? What undertones
Still linger in the quiet warmth of day
Here, where the wind forgets to stir the air,
Still linger in the quiet warmth of day
Here, where the wind forgets to stir the air,
And shadows, passing silently away,
Leave time embalmed in the atmosphere?

Whispering splendour? Beauty? Pools of blood
Scarlet as oleanders in the dust?
Nothing but pebbles where great pillars stood
And insect feet to trample out the past.
Only these tiny things beneath the sky
– A little life within eternity.

A READING OF POMPILIA'S STORY*

M. E. MASON

I heard the story of Pompilia read
So perfectly, it seemed Pompilia's self.
And, with one leap the sundering flood of years
Was over past – the great room slipped away.
The yellow murk of London faded out
In the warm radiance of Italian skies,
Grey walls and Palaces reared their proud heads
Into the sunlit air, and Tiber rolled
Majestical among the Seven Hills,
Pompilia's City, famed in all the world . . .
She grew there, like some shy half-opened flower
From slender stem, lifting her face to Heaven
Shedding the morning fragrance of her soul
On all around . . . the flame of Innocence
About her made a glimmering space, wherein
Was lit the golden nimbus of her hair –
Like one of Lippi's Saints upon a wall.
Then came her marriage, and before mine eyes
That other City of illustrious sons,
Set like a jewel in the Tuscan plain . . .
Pompilia's wedded home, for good or ill,
Nor long for good – too soon about her path
Clouds gathered thick, and evil, lurking things
Out of the shadows sought to reach her soul . . .
And like a wounded hare caught in the pits
I heard her cry – and knew her journeyings
Through the thronged streets to that Archbishop's house,
The piteous prayer, her hope, of no avail . . .
And as some stricken thing that seeks its lair,
Pompilia turned to home . . .
You know the rest,
The shuddering tale set forth in that old Book.
. . . Now came her voice – feeble from mortal pain
Yet soft with wondering joy, as a bird's voice
Might be in fitful sun – ere yet the rain
Hath ceased from falling – In her dim chamber
Low crooning to the babe upon her breast . . .
In such bewilderment of short-lived bliss
All grief – all pains – all questionings – all tears,

* This Reading by Dame Sybil Thorndike was arranged by The Poetry Society.

All agony of death preknown – all gone . . .
Peace – only peace – no room for aught save Peace!
And in the stillness, when the last words ceased,
I almost *saw* Pompilia's soul take flight.

MARTINMAS WIND

MARY LAWRENCE

i

This is that time of winter I love most,
When sea-winds roar and all trees' leaves are lost,
Before the obvious beauty of the frost.

The bare boughs toss, the skies are torn and grey;
The sun breaks through with low, slant, lovely ray,
And makes most fair, because most short, the day.

Spiritual things have then great influence;
Hours do not limit time, nor space a fence,
Nor are friends absent for they are far hence.

Dear love, thou art still near me where thou art;
Strong as these gales is love, and though apart,
My spirit rests, as once I, on thy heart.

ii

Some day mine eyes will feed on thee again,
As one, who fears the night-marauding 'plane,
Sees morning through the broken window-pane.

Or as one buried long, who feared to die
Beneath fantastic, tortured masonry,
Sees once again the clean and blessed sky.

ORIOLE PRIZE 1955

ORIOLE (the Poets' Group of the Poetry Society) offers an award of £5 for the best Mystical Poem received. This should be unpublished, and should not exceed twenty-eight lines. The competition is open to all; entrance fee 2s. 6d. per entry. The adjudicators reserve the right to divide the prize or to withhold it if no entry is of sufficient merit. Competitors must adopt a pseudonym which should appear in block capitals both on the manuscript and on a sealed envelope containing the entrant's name and address. MSS will not be returned. The winning poem will be published in *The Poetry Review*. Closing date, 31st July, 1955. Address: Oriole Prize, The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, W.1.

THE BOOK OF THE YEAR:
AN EDITORIAL SYMPOSIUM

Thousands of books were published for the first time in 1954. To choose one among them as the *Best* seems an impossibility, and it certainly is: time alone can make the ultimate choice, for the 'best' means the book that is likely to become a classic. But to say which in one's personal reading is the book that has made the impression most vividly felt when looking back is a different thing, and each member of the Editorial Board of *The Poetry Review* has been requested to indulge his or her selective impulse before settling down to the books of 1955. The response is set forth below. That prose-works as well as volumes by poets are included in the survey must not be thought a reflection on the virtue of the year's poetry.

KENNEDY WILLIAMSON

I am not going to be inveigled by any blandishment into making a forthright declaration as to the best book of the year, but I am ready to say that no book which I have read in 1954 has given me greater pleasure than *Collected Poems* by Frances Cornford (Cresset Press, 10s. 6d.). From her previous books of verse, the earliest issued in 1910, the poet has chosen all that she wishes to preserve. Although her fastidiousness consigned to the discard some poems which her admirers would retain, this quintessence-volume is indeed a rare elixir.

THOMAS MOULT

One of the most fascinating personalities among modern poets has been William Butler Yeats. His life was rich and rare through its enthusiasms and *goodness*, and those of us who were fortunate enough to meet him in person, especially during his prime, could not fail to wish that they might know all about his existence 'behind the scenes'. At last, fifteen years after his death, they have been given the opportunity: *The Letters of W. B. Yeats*, edited – in a masterly way – by Allan Wade (Rupert Hart-Davis, £3 3s.), is for me, without question, the Book of the Year.

The growth of a poet, his struggles and triumphs, loves and hates, fun and griefs – and yes, even his decline – can be followed even more intimately in this monumental work than, a year earlier, we were able to observe Charles Dickens in Edgar Johnson's biography as a man and a genius. Let me add that the book will give the reader such exaltation and happiness that at the published price of three guineas it is absurdly cheap!

JOHN GRADDON

I would choose *Under Milk Wood* by Dylan Thomas (Dent, 8s. 6d.) for probably quite the wrong reasons.

Ending as it so unfortunately did the creative work of a fairly controversial figure, it acted as a catalyst in the resolution and indeed revaluation of literary judgement that has been, to some extent, in a state of flux since the nineteen-twenties. It seems to mark the end of a period of literary uncertainty and the beginning of an epoch of greater stability with new mediums for communication supplementing the written word.

This may later be identified with the beginning of the new reign; but, to a very real extent, *Under Milk Wood* illustrates the death of the old and the birth of the new, and stands with a foot in both. Had Dylan Thomas lived he would have gone on from there, and to the written word and to the sound of the word he would have added the vision.

KATHLEEN VALMAI RICHARDSON

For one who must read many short poems in manuscript during the course of a year, continuity has great attractions. For this reason, added to its many merits, I choose Christopher Fry's *The Dark Is Light Enough* (Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, 8s. 6d.) as my most satisfying poetry reading during 1954.

But if I am to be quite honest, I must cheat a little on the question and say that in my entirely personal reading, a re-acquaintance with Marcel Proust's *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* has been my year's delight (and next year's too, maybe). During a period of stress and upheaval, to switch on the bedside lamp at last and allow the elegant, sinuous fronds of the Proustian sentences to lap over one's mind, finally to explode softly in the gentlest cadences imaginable, can restore the spirit like the air of his loved Balbec whose coast I know so well . .

That unhurried genius patiently seeking the finest textures, the remotest echoes, provides more than a soporific; here is poetry and wisdom; a vision of Truth and Beauty no longer lost but immortalized.

STEPHEN GRAHAM

What seems to me to be the best book I have read during the past year has been *Performing Flea,* P. G. Wodehouse's autobiography, published by Herbert Jenkins. It is a finely written story, amusing and authentic, and its chief value lies in the intimate picture of the indefatigable literary craftsman. Wodehouse lives in this book, which is of permanent interest to all who try to express themselves with the pen. In poetry the best I have read is *Brother To Dragons* by Robert Penn Warren (Eyre and Spottiswoode, 15s.), and in fiction, Shubin's *Stranger To Myself.*

EVELYN D. BANGAY

You ask my opinion on what is The Best Book of the Year. Lately I have only read old books and unpublished poems, but what a chance for a preliminary 'blurb' for a book in the making and a bit of wishful thinking!

Ninety years ago the 'Bayswater' sailed from Liverpool to Australia, carrying a large number of emigrants and taking four months over the voyage. A weekly chronicle was issued giving details of all the happenings to those on board, a naïve mixture of tragedy and comedy. Here was material asking to be put into narrative form, especially as my Father was the surgeon in charge of the passengers. He looked after their physical and mental well-being with immense care and enterprise. But present enterprise has flagged, and The Good Ship 'Bayswater' is still 'on the stocks'.

'DEAR EDITORS – '

(The opinions expressed in the following Letters from Readers are not necessarily those of *The Poetry Review*.)

'THE BALLAD OF SIR JOHN PHILPOT'

Under the above title, Mr. Herbert Palmer asks in a recent issue: 'Why in the name of reason did he label his poem "ballad"?' May I reply? A ballad is a miniature epic. It relates the exploits of a hero; prefers action to philosophy; is often provided with a refrain. Mr. Hare's ballad fulfils these conditions. The hero? – Philpot. Action? – the sea-fight; raids on the South Coast towns; a trial at law. Refrain? – the recurring music of:

> The men of the White Hart and the Rose,
> The Hope and the little, but wary, Swan.

It is 'classical' in that the poet combines flexibility with the *ne plus ultra* of terseness. No tautology, no

> Now lithe and listen, Gentlemen,
> And hearken what I say

for Kenneth Hare. He has presented the public with a new gem: the *classical ballad.*

D. ARNOLD COLVILE

THE POET IN THE THEATRE

Following Stuart Holroyd's article in the October-December number, one question that needs to come early on the agenda, surely, in any discussion of present-day verse drama is: Has any dramatist in any age written successful verse-plays about his own times?

The article speaks of Shakespeare and Milton. But are any of Shakespeare's plays about the London he knew? and how many of Milton's (if he can be classed as a dramatist at all) are about seventeenth-century England? 'Comus' and the Egerton children? – but doesn't 'Comus' only succeed by transporting

the whole thing to the region of fantasy? Greek tragedy is drawn from the heroic cycle, not from contemporary Athens.

Isn't there a sound reason for this – that poet-dramatists of the past have known that, since the people they met in the streets every day didn't talk in verse, it would be absurd to make them do it on the stage? It is possible to imagine one's grandfathers doing it (thus Shakespeare uses verse here and there quite successfully in the historical plays; and cf. Thomas Hardy's *The Dynasts*). But in the case of plays about one's own times, either the play will not ring true, or what the characters speak will not be verse. Wouldn't it be better if our own poets recognized this?

(Now somebody will get up and cite *Under Milk Wood*. But doesn't that only succeed *as a play* in proportion to the amount of it that is written in prose?)

H. M. WILSON

HE IS PUZZLED

I am feeling very puzzled about the English Sonnet. Last year a Sunday Newspaper organized a poetry competition, and a sonnet, 'To Churchill' was judged the best poem of 2,640 entries. I do not wish to cast any reflections on its author or on the judges who selected it, but I am just mystified and would like to know why it is considered to be of such high standard. I can see that it is original in its ideas, and it is also intelligible, and I like the third verse, but I thought there were very rigid rules connected with the sonnet, and I cannot see that lines ('Making old shadows new substance of debate') ('Trusted pilot until the dark night clears') four and fourteen scan well. I imagined that the winning poem of such a vast selection would be musical and metrical, as, for instance, the sonnets of Milton or Wordsworth, or would, perhaps, have some of the stateliness and grandness of Tennyson's verse.

I am enclosing part of the latter's famous 'Ode on the Death of Wellington'' which, oddly enough, I came across in a newspaper at about the same time, and thought very appropriate. This may not be exactly metrical either, but there are not such hard and fast rules about odes as about sonnets (or are there?): and surely there is so much more beauty and rhythm about this classic than about the modern poems referred to. I do realize, though, that it is useless to compare poems of another age with modern ones, nor is it my business to try to do so.

J. EATON

*

MISS KATHLEEN CRACROFT

Miss Kathleen Cracroft, for many years the General Secretary and Registrar of The Poetry Society, has resigned, and will live on the South Coast after her marriage.

Members and others in association with the Society will join the General Council in wishing her, now Mrs. Sheppard, lasting happiness. They may feel that they would like to be associated with a farewell gift, and their contributions towards it will be gladly received by Mrs. T. L. Adamson, Hon. Treasurer of the Fund. Please send early.

INTERPRETING WORDSWORTH AND OTHERS

STEPHEN GRAHAM

Wordsworth, a Re-interpretation, by F. W. Bateson (Longmans, 21s.)
Language as Gesture, by R. P. Blackmur (Allen & Unwin, 25s.)

The trouble is not in Wordsworth but in ourselves. That is why he has to be interpreted and then after a given number of years re-interpreted. Once he used to be quite clear and a joy to everyone, but now some folk do not quite get him. The elderly nation needs a hearing aid. Wordsworth is a classic. That's admitted. Hats off! He must be studied for examinations. He is 'set'. He may be immortal but more strictly speaking he is 'period', archaic. Such lines as:

> No friend, no comrade Lucy knew,
> She dwelt on a wide moor –

are simply baffling and for that poem the student needs a glossary of one-syllable words. Other poems need some clever Freudian analysis. How otherwise get at the back of those words once thought so beautiful:

> The Moon doth with delight
> Look round her when the heavens are bare.

Indeed the professorial conclusion is that you must study the intimate life of a writer in order to understand what he wrote. That first happened when Froude waited for Carlyle to die and then killed him again with a biography. But Chesterton remarked that it was curious if dyspepsia produced *Sartor Resartus*, and I suppose one might add it would be equally curious if having an affair with a girl in France produced the 'Ode on the Intimations of Immortality'. But in this study of literature coupled with biography it is interesting to note that living poets are immune, and one can appreciate T. S. Eliot without having the least knowledge of his sexual experiences or his stomach troubles, though it is being noted, perhaps prematurely, that he has strange obsessions. To be disclosed to the public the secret story of those obsessions will have to wait till the laudatory obituaries have ceased to appear.

Wordsworth has been much parodied. That is the starting point of Mr. Bateson's book. Parody is of course ridicule. It may be witty, but it is always an expression of conceit, sometimes of justifiable conceit but generally not. The man who wrote 'safe in the arms of a copper' no doubt thought himself a terribly clever fellow, but the hymn had ceased to be sacred for him or to have much meaning. It is much the same when the sophisticated make jest at the expense of Wordsworth's simplicities, the trouble is not in Wordsworth but in them.

But the poetry has survived all the jesters, and the star of Wordsworth is as serene as it was a hundred years ago. He is loved by millions whose names do not get into print, even into small print.

Tennyson, addressing the Queen when he was crowned Poet Laureate, said he was receiving the laurel 'greener from the brows of him who uttered nothing base'. That also stands, and seems to have become part of the eternal

substance of poetry. But in a debunking age the idea of Wordsworth as the poet who uttered nothing base is distasteful. It has to be shown that even if he wrote nothing base he was himself averagely base. Mr. Bateson quotes De Quincey as saying that the poet's animal passions and appetites were strong, corroborated by the fact that Wordsworth had a long nose which was also arched, apparently a bad sign. His sensuality was so unbridled that he had a guilty passion for his sister. He was a sort of Hamlet's uncle who wrote verse. That brings him down with a bump.

So when Wordsworth looked upon the primrose on the river's brim he did so with incestuous eyes. And when he said that that primrose was to him a yellow primrose and nothing more, it was not entirely the truth. Not that Mr. Bateson says so; he does not deny the beautiful and the sublime, but by implication he leaves a smear upon it.

In Mr. Blackmur's *Language as Gesture* some poets of our time are interpreted though naturally not by means of biographical detail. The volume is a collection of essays and reviews without a continuous theme. A man of some reputation writes of T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, E. E. Cummings, Wallace Stevens and others. He is not sufficiently simple and straightforward for the wide poetry-reading public. Pity he prefers to write for only a few.

BURNS AND MACDIARMID

WILLIAM KEAN SEYMOUR

Rab the Rhymer, by Eric Crozier (J. Garnet Miller Ltd., London, 7s. 6d.)
Choose You This Day, by Ada Nelson, with Introduction by Hugh MacDiarmid (Wm. MacLellan, Glasgow, 3s. 6d.)
Selected Poems of Hugh MacDiarmid (MacLellan, 7s. 6d.)

The vogue of Burns in the hearts of his countrymen, whether at home or overseas, has no foreseeable limits. For one thing, his poetry strongly expresses their national pride; for another, he wrote largely in Scottish dialect; and, all in all, his life story, tragic and romantic, is closely inwoven with the people's songs. It was fitting, then, that Eric Crozier should write a three-act play on the most productive period of the poet's life, 1786, and intersperse it with the bard's own songs. The dialogue is guid braid Scots and the sentiments are true to 'rantin', rhymin' Robin'. Characters include two of his loves, Jean Armour and Highland Mary, and also Jean's angry father and 'Holy Willie'.

Miss Nelson's book is described as 'a study in folk-memory and history' and takes the form of Ossian-like poems in long exclamatory rhymed lines with – except for the central piece 'Saul' – a strong suggestion of Celtic or Gaelic Twilight about them. They serve to introduce a scholarly introduction by Hugh MacDiarmid in praise of the Gaelic civilization and genius, in which he pleads for their better recognition by the people of England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales and Cornwall, as part of 'a long overdue reaction against the Graeco-Latin domination of the European mind' to which the Renaissance gave such an impetus.

To say that Mr. MacDiarmid is the twentieth-century Burns is to use a rough handy comparison merely as a starting point. He is as warm and fierce and impulsive in his mainly lyrical poems as ever Burns was; but when we start on a close inspection of his work we recognize both the difference in his dialect forms and the modern focus of his mind, as keen and clean with creative critical power as any poets of this century. His use of Lallans is, more than Burns', deliberate and contrived, a synthetic language not in popular use; but it serves to promote that 'Scottish Renaissance' which is his life's chief purpose; and, more than any of the new order of Scottish 'makars', he is forcing all lovers of pure poetry – in the sense of verse springing from a twin functioning of mind and spirit – to recognize his achievement. This is a book to buy and cherish.

THE CONTINENTAL MUSE

GEOFFREY JOHNSON

Lyric Poetry of the Italian Renaissance, an Anthology with Verse Translations assembled by L. R. Lind (London: Geoffrey Cumberlege, 40s.)

Selected Poems of Friedrich Hölderlin, translated by J. B. Leishman (Hogarth Press, 12s. 6d.)

Arthur Rimbaud 1854–1954, by Enid Starkie (Oxford University Press, 2s. 6d.)

The Poetic Drama of Paul Claudel, by Joseph Chiari (The Harvill Press, 15s.)

Apollinaire, by Marcel Adema, translated from the French by Denise Folliot (Heinemann, 18s.)

Homages et Satires. Poems in French, by George A. Bischoff (Saint Catherine Press, 7s. 6d.)

Much the most facinating of these books is Professor Lind's assembly of translations, with the originals printed facing them, from hands as various as those of Wordsworth, D. G. Rossetti, John Addington Symonds and Ezra Pound. Mr. Lind, Professor of Latin and Greek at Kansas University, himself contributes versions which show him to be as able in translation as in compiling. Equally gifted is his collaborator, Thomas G. Bergin, Professor of Romance Languages at Yale, who contributes not only a baker's dozen but a most entertaining and enlightening introduction. Many may recall that John Heath Stubb's version of Poliziano's 'Dance Song', included here, originally appeared in the May-June 1950 *Poetry Review*; many more still should hasten to acquire this beautiful collection.

Dr. Leishman's is a revision and expansion of his 1944 book; the most important addition is his rendering of the 'Archipelago'. The original German faces the English, which is almost always as accurate as a translation can be without killing the poetry. The long introduction and scholarly notes throw much light on this great but baffling contemporary of Schiller and Goethe, particularly on his lamentable madness.

Enid Starkie in the Zaharoff Lecture for 1954 has skilfully summarized the accumulated bibliography and also the gradual evolution of critical opinion about that enigmatic figure, part saint, part glorious poet, part odious guttersnipe, Arthur Rimbaud. Though very modest about her own performances, she has by her researches, her previous books and this, done much to clarify and establish the Rimbaud canon.

The work of Paul Claudel, who is in some respects a disciple of Rimbaud, and who by his *versets* alone is an innovator in the metrics of poetic drama, has been given a most sensitive and scholarly analysis; not only is Joseph Chiari's style clear and engaging, but he writes from a vast fund of knowledge and with authority.

The poetry of Guillaume Apollinaire, much of it stunt-verse with the punctuation deliberately left out, is, despite the fashionable cackle of the moment, much less interesting than his actual life. M. Adema's account of it admirably arises to the occasion in vividness and readability. George A. Bischoff's poems are not likely to set either the Thames or his native Danube on fire. Yet it is no mean achievement for a Roumanian who has never lived in France, but in Austria and then in England, to compose verse in French with such ease and elegance, and occasionally, as in his tributes to masters like Ronsard and Racine, with distinction.

'YOUNGER POETS, KINDLY NOTE!'

F. PRATT GREEN

Poems by Ivor Gurney, with a Memoir by Edmund Blunden (Hutchinson, 7s. 6d.)
The Headlands, by Howard Sergeant (Putnam, 7s. 6d.)
Many Long Years Ago, by Ogden Nash (Dent, 8s. 6d.)
The Face is Familiar, by Ogden Nash (Dent, 8s. 6d.)

Edmund Blunden, himself a Georgian and more than a Georgian, if the word is still to be used derogatively, has helped to rescue from oblivion a poet and musician who made a brief reputation for himself during the First World War. Ivor Gurney's war poetry expressed a mood closer to that of Brooke than Sassoon or Owen:

> Then the crumbs
> Of praise the little versemen joyed to take
> Shall be forgotten; then they must know we are,
> For all our skill in words, equal in might
> And strong of mettle as those we honoured; make
> The name of poet terrible in just war,
> And like a crown of honour upon the fight.

From 1922 to 1937, until his death, Gurney suffered the sad fate of Clare. But, again like Clare, mental derangement did not destroy his inspiration. Blunden tells us, in a restrained and moving memoir, that each poem was sent to his friend Marion M. Scott, whose care of the manuscripts has enabled this selection, dedicated to her, to be published.

Gurney's sickness, by removing him from the literary arena, may have spared him the temptations which beset some poets in a period when style changes every decade. Tragically, he had to be himself. Thus his poems, written out of memories of war and of the countryside, and poignant with a sense of deprivation, have a refreshing directness and originality:

> Then there was salt in life but now none is known
> To me who cannot go either where white is blown
> Of the grass, or scarlet willow-herb of past memory.
> Nothing is sweet to thinking, nothing from life free.

A fanfare of acknowledgements introduces Howard Sergeant's new collection of poems, raising our expectations. It is, however, difficult to make up one's mind about a poet who can be arresting and original, as in 'The Woman in the Park' and 'The Voice on the Stair', and yet has a weakness for literary fashions which do not suit him and are already outmoded, as when he falls into such affectations, reminiscent of George Barker at his worst, as 'mantic childscapes castled from the sands'. The two sequences, despite poems of individual beauty and flashes of poetic insight, are disappointing; the total effect is blurred. It seems likely that Mr. Sergeant will be remembered chiefly for the generous encouragement, as editor of *Outposts*, he has given other poets.

Ogden Nash, on the other hand, is always devastatingly himself. His shrewd and amusing exposures of the follies and foibles of human nature will be enjoyed by anyone with a sense of humour and an interest in versification. Open at random:

> Does anybody mind if I don't live in a house that is quaint?
> Because, for one thing, quaint houses are generally houses where plumbing ain't,
> And while I don't hold with fanatical steel-and-glass modernistic bigots,
> Still, I do think that it simplifies life if you live it surrounded by efficient pipes and faucets and spigots.

And there's plenty of wisdom in the fun:

> One thing that literature would be greatly the better for
> Would be a more restricted employment by authors of simile and metaphor. . .

Younger poets, kindly note!

All these books, by the way, are reasonably priced, which we hope indicates an economic trend in the right direction.

THREE TRANSLATIONS

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

Arabic Andalusian Casidas, Joan Penelope Cope (Peter Russell, 6s.)
Dante's Purgatorio, Sydney Fowler Wright (Oliver and Boyd, 10s. 6d.)
Euripides' Ion, Gilbert Murray (Allen and Unwin, 7s. 6d.)

The whole problem of translating is raised by these admirable translations: to be literal or to create an approximation as a work of art in its own right. Joan Penelope Cope, in a book splendidly hand-printed and produced,

presents prose translations of forty-six short lyrical poems by Moorish poets of the tenth to the thirteenth century. The darting, voluptuous imagery of each chiselled poem is epigrammatic and incandescent and we cannot doubt that, although the beauty of rhyme and metre is absent, the spirit and delight have been retained.

The Divine Comedy has perenially offered a challenge of how to reproduce, in our language, which lacks the multiplicity of Italian rhyme endings, not only Dante's vision but his word music. The effort is renewed continually and the poets who have music to command bring us nearer to a full appreciation. Mr. Fowler Wright renounces the *terza rima* of the original as an impossible hurdle, but his rhyme patterns are varied and skilful and within those patterns he has not strained the text.

Sixty years have passed since Gilbert Murray became Professor of Greek at Glasgow University and set himself to recall the dignity and nobility of they Greek world, not only by bringing the dramas of Sophocles, Aeschylus and Euripides to the English stage as a vital force but by carrying the Greek spirit into the affairs of nations. He has walked – symbolically – in ancient Athens and, as a poet, he has made the happy compromise and presented classical writings in accentual metres and the majestic utterance. Gilbert Murray's answer to the problem of translation is daring, for the unrhymed original is translated into rhymed couplets. He captures the spirit of the play without a thought for the stage, and in the charm of his verse we share his enjoyment.

POET-NOVELISTS

JOHN GRADDON

The Secret Kingdom, by William Kean Seymour (Herbert Jenkins, 10s. 6d.)
A Shower of Summer Days, by May Sarton (Hutchinson, 9s. 6d.)
Ash on a Young Man's Sleeve, by Dannie Abse (Hutchinson, 9s. 6d.)

The complete literary figure should not find any form of writing alien to his talent, yet, in this age of specialization, there is often a degree of wonder when a playwright criticizes or a novelist writes a poem, as if they were forsaking their true metier.

Here are three novels by poets, or by novelists who also write poetry. No qualification must be allowed to detract from their value as novels, but the fact that they are written by poets does add a piquancy, an assurance of an added insight into human behaviour and a guarantee that word and image will be deployed skilfully, accurately and imaginatively.

William Kean Seymour, a doyen of the Society, is naturally the more considerable figure. His literary output is quite outstanding and each novel enhances his reputation. The theme of *The Secret Kingdom* is a broken marriage and it is narrated here with a civilized urbanity. The characters live 'in the round' and within a known world. The emotional development is most skilfully depicted, without haste or artifice, and this very naturalism absorbs the undivided attention of the reader. Mr. Kean Seymour knows the human heart.

Miss May Sarton writes in *A Shower of Summer Days* about marriage with a difference – the marriage of a house with a family over many generations. It has the same questing, faulty, sublime imperfection as any human contract – the moments of glory and illusion, and the times of indifference, complacency and despair. The atmosphere is created with a rare, precious and appealing delicacy.

So often adolescence is recollected in adult turbulence with all its values falsified by different standards and greater experience. In Mr. Dannie Abse's *Ash on a Young Man's Sleeve*, a richly complicated situation, both in nationality, and in period, surround the boy 'ten year's high', puzzles and confuses him, but he grows through it as a plant through entangling weed. There is no doubt that a Welshman and a poet writes here.

THE GUILD POETS

KATHLEEN VALMAI RICHARDSON

Against Defeat, by Herbert Bluen
Selected Poems by Carla Lanyon Lanyon
Twenty-two Poems by Odette Tchnernine
Footprint in Snow, by Rita Spurr
Audition, by Charles Duranty
Seasons and Situations, by Maurice C. Cole
The Darkest Path, by R. J. Freixa

(The Guild Press, each volume 2s.)

This excellently printed and produced series, edited by John Hoffman, offers short selections from the work of many poets already familiar to readers of *The Poetry Review*, at a miraculously modest price.

In *Against Defeat*, the essence of Herbert Bluen's clearly expressed, gentle verse is well typified in his poems 'Charles and Mary Lamb', 'Nocturne'. 'Silence', with its striking closing image, is one of the best poems of his that I have so far encountered. Carla Lanyon Lanyon's volume opens with a fine piece, 'Beginning', and there is an open quality about much of this verse which seems to stem from a traditional classic feeling for the countryside. A Greek austerity informs such poems as 'The Midst of Battle' and 'Poachers'. I particularly liked 'As If a Man Built a House'.

'Footprint in Snow', the title poem of Rita Spurr's collection, promises much that is fulfilled as one reads on. 'The White Horse' and 'Last Memory' have originality and power. Odette Tchnernine is a sensitive poet whose 'The Flower' and 'Refrain' I was glad to meet with again. She has an eye for the small miracle and an ear for the unhackneyed.

Charles Duranty's *Audition* records contemporary strifes and glooms; a trifle self-conscious as to adjective but capable of conveying rage without hysteria in 'The Rebel'. Maurice Cole is more truly of to-day in his eschewal of 'poetic' language. 'Cuckoo' is a good modern poster of a much-tried bird. (Incidentally it is interesting to compare Mr. Bluen's 'Suicide' with Mr. Cole's). R. J. Freixa's *Darkest Path* does not wander off into obscurity but has a Latin orderliness; the wayside fruits have tang; sometimes their bitter juice is spilled in compassion, as in 'The Death of a Housewife' and, as always, it is the objective poems which are the most telling.

'O THE BRAVE BANNERS!'

NOTES BY THE EDITORIAL STAFF

(The inclusion of a new work in these notes does not preclude a subsequent review.)

In a letter to a friend W. B. Yeats wrote that he had invited James Joyce to stay as his guest for a few days. 'If he comes I shall have to use the utmost ingenuity to hide the fact that I have never finished *Ulysses*.' The Editorial Staff have often wondered how many present-day readers, outwardly devout and thoroughgoing, would be obliged to make a similar confession about the verse of Dylan Thomas. Probably for their benefit an expository study of which the most important section appears to us to be a glossary, has been compiled by Elder Olsen with the title *The Poetry of Dylan Thomas* (University of Chicago Press and Cambridge University Press, 25s.). Next on the editorial table to this painstakingly-written and very enlightening work are two books about William Blake. Max Plowman's *Poems and Prophecies* is a new issue in Dent's Everyman's Library (7s.), and Joseph Wicksteed's interpretation of *Jerusalem* (Trianan Press and Faber and Faber, three guineas) is a beautiful production and reproduction with twenty-eight plates, sponsored by the Blake Trust.

> Come then, my friend, an hour to pleasure spare
> And quit awhile your business and your care:
> Bonds, interest, all; the credit and the debt;
> Nay, e'en your wife –

Yes, those lines might have been written this very day, so modern they are. But in the original they belong to the middle of the first century of our era, extracted from one of Juvenal's *Satires*, translated into English in 1802 by William Gifford. John Warrington has edited and partly re-written the translation for Dent's Everyman's Library (6s. net) – a brilliant piece of work, enriched by the addition of the Satires of Perseus. Again there is a twentieth-century flavour about them:

> Live on the interest of your fortune, boy,
> To touch the principal is to destroy!

Other reprints on the table are *Matthew Arnold, a Selection*, by Kenneth Allott (Penguin, 2s.) and two new volumes in 'The World's Classics', *Letters of John Keats*, selected by Frederick Page (Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, double volume, 8s. 6d.) and *Letters of William Wordsworth*, selected by Philip Wayne (same publishers, 5s.). Every book-lover will know how treasurable these neat volumes are when we add that simply to handle them is a delight.

*

The stream of new verse continues to flow. Into the Editorial boardroom many volumes have come, varying in quality, all of them demanding acknowledgement. In many places, overseas as well as at home, they have been published, and one even comes from Oaxaca, Mexico. The author's name is not unknown here – Margaret Lewis Albanese, a member of The Poetry Society of America, and her book is entitled *Heir to Eden*. She writes of 'festival and autumn song', and very capably, especially in her phrasing: 'How like the lilies' and 'These few green days . . . '

From Australia: *With a Hawk's Quill*, by James Picot (Meanjin Press, Melbourne, 10s. 6d.). The author died in a Siam prison-camp during the

Second World War, and his utterance, devotedly edited by C. B. Christesen, is poignant and profoundly personal. He did not live to see his prophecy come true – a prophecy uttered so often in poetry: 'There shall be laughter, there shall be a city . . . ' Nor have the rest of us lived to see a laughing city either. A queer title, *An Armada of Thirty Whales,* introduces the latest volume in The Yale Series of Younger Poets (Geoffrey Cumberlege, 20s.) edited by another exile from Britain, W. H. Auden. Daniel G. Hoffman's work is well known in the U.S.A., and his concentration on 'Nature' and the creatures of earth and water lures him into such a commentary as this:

All shrinks in the rage of the sun
save the courage of clams, and their faith . . .

Nor, being young and susceptible, can he resist beginning a piece with:

An exaltation of larks arising
With elocutionary tongue . . .

Also from America comes *Ever the Sunrise,* by Eleanor H. Matthews (Wings Press, 2 dollars). Nature and the Spirit of Man are her inspiration until we reach the third part of the book – 'After Hiroshima', and it is good to know that the poets and thinkers across the Atlantic do not share the militaristic reaction to 'the evil mushroom'. The same publishers have issued *Home to the Hills* (2 dollars), Florence Wilson Roper's new volume. No modernism here either! Miss Roper has imagination and uses it. Her intellectual equipment is the servant, not the dictator. The result is beautiful imagery and phrasing – and quiet singing.

*

Bayka Russell, an American poet, shows excellent craftsmanship in her book of philosophic and metaphysical themes which, being interpreted through the symbolism of natural life, hills and trees, meadows and flowers, are never vague, never overburdened. *Beyond To-morrow* (Falmouth House, 2 dollars) is warmly human, lyrical with hope and memory. Not at all resembling the work of George MacBeth – *A Form of Words* (Fantasy Press, Oxford, 9s. 6d.):

Well, why for Christ's sweet sake men swear amazes
Those chary tongues that fail in their design
To damn verse oaths bedevilled with faint praises.

Which came first, the hen or the egg? If ever the old conundrum applied to verse it is now. Which came first, the author's thought or his impulse to say it with rhyme and (possibly) metre? . . . The title of the piece, by the way, is 'Hell's Blaring Bells'.

From Bombay: *Messages from Tibet and Other Poems,* by Bhikshu Sangharakshita (Hind Kitabs, 1–8 rupees). Vivid colour and strange rich music are everywhere in this little volume of about fifty pieces, and it will be especially attractive to some English readers because of the dedication – to Clare Cameron, who was the wife of the late Thomas Burke, author of those memorable short stories entitled *Limehouse Nights.*

From Buenos Aires: *To See, To Paint, To Pen,* by Violet Warwick Skelton, and *V. E. R. Describir Relatar,* by the same author. Examining this latter book first, we were bemoaning our ill-fortune at being unable to read it, because it is all in Spanish-American, so that we could not even state the price. But then we recognized the other of Miss Skelton's books as the same in an English translation. Both are embellished by some *spirituelle* drawings in black and

white. *Les Chemins de la Paix* is also in another language, but this time French, the author being our friend Raphael Barquissau, whose brilliant lecture on Baudelaire in the Society's rooms is well remembered. Barquissau's essays are scholarly and yet humane: in their atmosphere and general tone they recall the France of sixty or seventy years since, when it was rather more justifiably regarded as the most cultured nation in Europe.

Peter Russell, another old friend, has translated – and published – *Three Elegies of Quintilius*. The book is exquisitely printed, and the B.B.C. is associated with the translations, for some of them have been broadcast. *Angry Decade; Poems 1940–1950*, by Raymond Tong (Fortune Press, 6s.). The title indicates the spirit of Mr. Tong's skilled verse, but confidence and hope are never absent:

> . . . from the cruel labyrinth
> of these insane and lonely years
> we will emerge one day into
> new and far more fertile valleys.

Wolves, by John Dumerecq (Kenion Press, 7s. 6d.), has a similar quality – 'The fountains of our hopes and fears splash the surrounding years'. *Matinee Idols*, by Jonathan Goodman (Mitre Press, 7s. 6d.), is in lighter vein. But it is thoughtful and free, with a care for technique which might be expected from a poet who is stage-manager of a well-known London repertory company – at the age of twenty-three!

*

Lines suggested by Degas' painting of Spartan youths and girls about to wrestle are a feature of Arthur Ball's well-chosen collection, *A Place for Tritons* (Headley Bros., 8s. 6d.). Other features are poems that have appeared in this journal, which indicate careful technique and original thought. Another Fantasy Press publication is *Fighting Terms*, by Thom Gunn (8s. 6d.). We prefer to the crude musings of a soldier – 'randy, rowdy and rough' – the quieter 'Lerici', about Shelley, Byron and the sea. *Book of the Reborn*, by Blanche René (Fortune Press) is another example of thought outdoing emotion and imagination: but it is the thought of a fine, aspiring mind. Molly Cale's *Poems* (Clarendon Printers, Beaconsfield) express a devout and happy nature, especially the prose-poem to the memory of Sir Hamilton Harty. Sir Eugen Millington-Drake has contributed a foreword to *Rain in My Heart*, by Adi K. Sett (Fortune Press, 6s.). He emphasizes a recurring line: 'This hour I love the best, this hour of cold, steel-grey dawn', and writes that 'the high quality of poetry written in English by Indians is a constant surprise and delight to me.' The reader of Mr. Sett's poems will share both the surprise and the delight. (See also *Messages from Tibet*.) Leslie Barker has made the effort of producing *Stars to Ashes* entirely by himself 'to get over the high cost of printing'. His 'small hand-press' is worked at Fairlight in Sussex. *Bones and Ashes*, by Peter Crean (Caucasus Press) is another of the 'little books' whose appearance is further proof of what devotion to the beautiful in human life can mean. Proof again, and ample, is in *Twenty Poems* by E. S. Youngman and *Sins and Seasons*, by R. L. Mitchell (Stockwell, 1s. 6d. each); *The White Kid*, by George Moor (MacLellan, Glasgow, 3s. 6d.); and *The Fall of Phaethon*, by Derek Parker, which, coming from Bristol, announces the author as one of The Zebra Poets. 'O, the brave banners!'

TOWARDS PARNASSUS:
THE ALBERT RALPH KORN POETRY AWARD

KENNEDY WILLIAMSON

In this memorable competition there was an exceptionally large number of entries. Paris, in old Troy, felt rueful, no doubt, at having to make choice between three rivals, but what would his self-pity have been, if he had needed to award one prize among 205 competitors! True, three-quarters of the entries went almost at once into the discard – not without a pang in the heart of the adjudicator, but at least without qualms that he was doing any injustice. About fifty accordingly were still in the running. The following are commended:

Carla Lanyon Lanyon, Joan McCubbin, Douglas Gibson, W. H. Boore, Jon Terry, Mrs. Shanti Zachariah, A. V. Stuart, Renata Cargnelli, Terence Heywood, E. Jurman, F. Pratt Green, Omar S. Pound (U.S.A.), Dr. Florence Wickelgren, Sylvia Tatham, Marjorie Baldwin, Michael Ivens, Margaret H. Connah (Queensland), G. J. Blundell, Alan Smithies, Alexander Sloan, M. E. Millen, A. J. Baird. Ronald M. Heffer.

The following are highly commended; all of them came near to winning the Award:

Mrs. Barbara Baker, Mrs. Betty Parvin, Mrs. Margaret Johansen, Midgley Russell, Pamela Melnikoff, Margaret Rhodes Somerville, Paul Selver, Gila Uriel (Tel-Aviv), Fay Kershaw, Helen Punch, J. J. Curle, B. R. Gibbs, Lake Aske, Winifred Kingdon-Ward, Mrs. Juanita Peirse, Sandford Allen McGavern (Virginia), Joan E. Swift, Mrs. Janet Teulon Woods (Kenya), Dudley G. Davies, Fania Kruger (Texas), Lynne Mitchell Carter (Pennsylvania), Malcolm H. Tattersall, Mabel Parker, Dorothy Birch.

The Award is made to Dorothy Spring, Ridgeway Road, Sheffield 12, for her poem *Eve*, which has form and architecture, a verbal music, and a profound philosophy.

EVE

DOROTHY SPRING

As Eve gathered blossom
  In a deep coomb,
She wakened an adder
  That slept among the broom.

The small gold flowers
  Lay all in a drift;
'Dine with me, lady,
  And I'll give you a gift.'

'If I should dine with you,
What is there to eat?'
'A bright apple, lady,
That tastes both sharp and sweet.'

The small gold flowers
Lay all on the floor;
She ate the bright apple
And threw away the core.

'What is your gift for me,
Adder in the broom?'
'The world's sorrow, lady,
And the world's room.'

PREMIUM COMPETITION: REPORT NEW SERIES NO. 21

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

Out of a good entry I selected six poems of particular merit from which to make my final choice. I give the award to 'Graduate' by Carla Lanyon Lanyon, and offer a special mention to the other five. With an economy of simple language Miss Lanyon's mounting and revealing images transmit a quiet yet profound emotion and illuminate her own experience – and ours also, however different may have been our own school-days or our lives since.

The following are highly commended: Sister M. Augustine ('Before Death Was'), Pamela Cleaver ('September Morning'), Glen Balfour Paul ('The Double Mercy'), J. Phoenice ('Martha'), and Jon Terry ('Hearing Your Laughter').

GRADUATE

CARLA LANYON LANYON

Remember now the greening days that are over
In time, yet part of you forever.

They will be about you through the light and laughter
Of full summer, as a bud shapes the leaf;
They shall not desert you on a night of grief
Nor in the numbed healing days that follow after.

From them come the songs which a careful mother
Shall sing to her children in some remote land,
The sweet secret knowledge they will understand
Without learning, and tell to one another.

Down the difficult years shall flow these young years
Like a slow feeding river of smooth water,
Whispering of emotions that no longer matter,
Benign lovers' echoes that once were wild with tears.

And into the greying end flows the greening;
Sea wind shakes the pane, shrills through the empty town,
And you are back again in blowing scarlet gown
By a great arc of ocean with gulls keening:

You are running to the hall, sea wind behind you,
A friend shouts a greeting but his words have fled,
Yours the lithe body and the golden head;
In the crooked firelit dusk his call shall find you.

Remember now the greening days that are over
In time, yet part of you forever.

THE ALBERT RALPH KORN ESSAY AWARD

Again The Poetry Society has pleasure in announcing that through the generosity of Mr. Albert Ralph Korn, of New York, a deep lover of poetry, and a distinguished American, a new and substantial annual Award is offered to Members in any part of the world.

A prize of Twenty Pounds will be given for the best short essay on 'Clarity versus Obscurity in Poetry'. It must be original, previously unpublished, and not longer than 1,500 words.

The judges will be appointed by The Editorial Board of *The Poetry Review*. The manuscript must be typewritten and sent anonymously, with the author's name and address accompanying it in a sealed envelope. No MSS can be returned. Closing date for the award is 30th June, 1955.

The outer envelope must be addressed: 'Albert Ralph Korn Award', The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London W.1, England.

THE HOWARD PARSONS SONNET COMPETITION FOR 1954–55

The Poetry Society has the pleasure of announcing a new Competition to succeed the competition in memory of Lord Alfred Douglas for a sonnet Shakespearian or, for this once, Petrarchan, upon any subject.

The prize of Eight Guineas which is generously offered by Mr. Howard Parsons, may be divided at the discretion of the adjudicator. The winning poem or poems will be published with the awards in *The Poetry Review*. Competitors must retain copies of their poems as these cannot be returned. The sonnets should bear a definite title and not merely be marked 'Sonnet'. Not more than two sonnets may be submitted by each competitor by 30th June, 1955. Address 'Sonnet Competition', The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1. Entries should bear names and addresses of competitors. No previously published poem may be entered.

(More Competitions on page 56)

JOHN SMITH

The Birth of Venus

'A craftsman of great skill . . . a poet who springs fully armed into the arena of present-day letters.' Richard Church (*John O' London's*).

'You must read Mr. Smith's poems . . . reflects the marvellous freshness and radiant surprise of Botticelli's masterpiece.' *Liverpool Daily Post.*

'Mr. Smith has the ear of a true poet.' *Nottingham Guardian Journal.*

'A high plane of technical dexterity.' *Aberdeen Press and Journal.*

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DANNIE ABSE

Walking Under Water

'He is a poet chiefly celebrating that courage, under the armoury of love.' Richard Church (*John O' London's*).

'Dannie Abse is a lively and resourceful poet: both for his own promise and his concern for poetry in general . . . he deserves respect.' *The Spectator.*

10s. 6d.

Poems by

IVOR GURNEY

'Now he will be remembered . . . ' *Time and Tide.*

'A delicately balanced and beautifully phrased memoir . . . what can be recognized at once is real, unforced originality in the handling of words, a pressure of emotion forcing them out in a pattern of pulsations rather than of rhythms . . . He is with Smart and Clare and others.' *Times Literary Supplement.*

7s. 6d.

HUTCHINSON & CO. LTD.

THE GREENWOOD COMPETITION FOR 1954–55

The Poetry Society is empowered by the executors of the late Mrs. Julia Wickham Greenwood to offer the sum of Twenty Pounds as the Shirley Carter Greenwood Prize for the best single poem in open competition.

Entries should be addressed 'The Greenwood Prize', 33 Portman Square, London, W.1. Only one poem may be submitted by any one competitor, the length not to exceed 250 lines; no previously published poem may be entered. The full name and address of the author must be given and a stamped addressed envelope enclosed if return of the poem is desired. If a nom-de-plume is adopted, name and address of sender must be given in a closed envelope bearing the pseudonym. The winning poem will be printed in *The Poetry Review* and may be reprinted at the discretion of the Editorial Board, who may also reserve near winners for publication in *The Poetry Review*. Closing date is 31st August, 1955.

THE PREMIUM COMPETITION

The above competition continues as before with the total entrance fee as prize money which may be won outright by a single competitor or may be divided at the discretion of the Premium Adjudicator. An entrance fee of 2s. 6d. will be charged, and a stamped addressed envelope should be enclosed if a receipt is desired. Competitors must observe the following rules:

1. One poem only may be entered by each competitor.
2. The poem must be typed and no stamped addressed envelope will be required unless a receipt is desired. (See Rule 3.)
3. Competitors must retain copies of their poems, as none can be returned.
4. Entries must be addressed 'Premium Competition', *The Poetry Review*, 33 Portman Square, W.1.
5. Each poem must bear the author's name and address.
6. Entrants must be members of The Poetry Society or regular subscribers to *The Poetry Review*.
7. The winner of a full Premium or one who has shared the prize twice will not be eligible for re-entry for twelve months.
8. No previously published poem may be entered.

The closing date for the next Premium Competition will be 1st March, 1955.

PORTMAN SQUARE – AUTUMN BURNS BRIGHT

The young poet with something worthwhile to say is no longer a voice in the wilderness; the voice does not depend on print. He can read, in his own way and to a connoisseur audience, a personal selection from his work which may make a bigger impact and cause wider ripples than any ephemeral 'little magazine' appearance. The door of Thirty-three Portman Square is open, and it is up to him to show his paces within. The usual responsibilities of a guest lie upon him: good taste, good manners and good companionship.

Our Poets in Person – Danny Abse, Thomas Blackburn, Elizabeth Jennings, James Kirkup and John Smith – did not disappoint us. Abse's Elegy for Dylan Thomas, Blackburn's forceful rhythms and images, Elizabeth Jennings's subtlety and Smith's revival of the ode form; Kirkup's skill, not only as a poet but as a reader, all greatly pleased the large audience. Moreover, Kirkup, reading his 'Broken Record', showed us a poet to be remembered. This beautiful poem, a technical tour de force yet warm with that human emotion which too often eludes the intellectual approach, crowned the evening.

Very aptly, this splendid opening was followed by a talk from Mr. Pratt Green on The Poet's Use of Words. Such was the interest aroused that more talks about

The Dreamer and the Sheaves
and Other Poems
BY I. R. ORTON

A first book of verse (to be published on 6th January) which reveals a maturity of poetic talent uncommon in a young writer. Miss Orton's themes are drawn from the everyday world and from the timeless channels of thought and imagination. 8s. 6d. net

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Impressions and sketches, some literary, some intimate, written in a West Country study, overlooking sea, estuary, and hills.

MIRACLE AT MIDNIGHT
By TOM FLEMING 6/- net

The text of the verse play which raised a storm of controversy among the critics when it was performed at Edinburgh's Gateway Theatre.

THE EPWORTH PRESS,
25-35 City Road, London, E.C.1

the technical side of poetry have been called for. Then, on 8th October, the Misses Esme and Vera Beringer graced our Library, and the fire and wit of their speaking, together with the aura of great traditions which they shed, provided a dazzling hour.

What can one say about Audience Night except that everyone enjoyed themselves? Particularly our Chairman, Tom Foley, who treated us to a ribald little rhyme that started the thing with a swing! Or about Play Night? Except that the Doran standard was upheld? We were glad to welcome, after a somewhat prolonged absence, that fine team of Foley's: Pamela Barnard, David Holmes and Daphne Thompson, in a reading of Modern Poetry; and two other favourites, Wilton Cole and Kelty MacLeod in 'Treasures Old and New'. We like these two to turn our treasures over, they have the right touch. Someone else has been delving in the treasure-chest – William Kean Seymour, whose Burns Into English was one of the braver sallies of the year. His transposition of the original Lallans into what they call in America 'British English' has already received wide publicity, here and in the States. Kelty MacLeod and Charles Doran read for him in both the vernacular and the Kean Seymourar, and the results were convincing enough for us to understand why this daring and accomplished prestidigitator felt sufficiently armed to dare the fastnesses of Burns himself and to emerge unscathed, as he described for us in an entertaining and truly interesting commentary. K.V.R.

NEW YEAR EVENINGS AT PORTMAN SQUARE

'The Battle for Beauty is Never Finally Won.'

With the first Friday of the year The Poetry Society begins its weekly series of Readings and Talks by Ladies and Gentlemen of Distinction in the World of Art, and here is the list of Programmes arranged by the Readings Committee for Friday evenings, 6.30 to 7.30 approx., at 33 Portman Square, between January and the end of March. 'Everybody Welcome.' Admission 1s. Non-Members 2s.

January	7	Moira Lister reads the Poetry of Her Own Choice. Chairman: The President, Thomas Moult.
	14	Audience Night. Members are invited to read their own or their favourite poem (limit, three minutes). Chairman: Thomas Foley.
	21	'The Golden Year of John Keats.' Arranged and presented by F. Pratt Green with members of The Croydon Circle.
	28	'Poets in Person.' Paul Dehn, Michael Hamburger, Robert Armstrong. Chairman: William Kean Seymour.
February	4	Special Play Reading of Strindberg's Masterpiece, 'The Father'. Arranged by Charles Doran.
	11	Margaret Rawlings reads Poems of Her Own Choice. Chairman: Kennedy Williamson, M.A.
	18	A. E. Coppard reads His Own Poems and Prose. Chairman: Thomas Moult.
	25	'The Jewel of English Medieval Literature – Sir Gawayne and The Green Knight,' by Kenneth Hare, M.A. Chairman: Herbert Palmer (who will read one of his own poems).
March	4	'This Carpet of Poetry.' Arranged by Roberta Shuttleworth.
	11	Folk Songs and Ballads. Arranged by Kelty MacLeod.
	18	Irish Poetry. Arranged by Thomas Foley.
	25	Audience Night. Members are again invited to read their own or their favourite poem (limit three minutes). Chairman: Kathleen V. Richardson.

* The next Gold Medal Examination will be held at 33 Portman Square on 24th May, 7 p.m.

SONNETS IN TWO KEYS

by

G. S. ODDY

Author of

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John Cowper Powys: 'What a reaction of admiration and wonder I had as I read this most engaging and absorbing story. The characters are so life-like that it is impossible not to feel when you close the volume that you are coming home from living among them and forming your own ideas about every one of them, just as you do about some group of friends you've been living among — spending a long holiday with — till you've been actually plunged into the whole drama of their lives.'

Daily Telegraph: 'This satiric comedy is delicately and amusingly handled.'

Thomas Moult: 'What a change from the usual fiction of our to-day . . . thoughtful, witty and attractive — and how admirably written.'

10/6 net

HERBERT JENKINS

POET'S PLEASURE:
NEWS FROM THE CENTRES

BY THE EDITORIAL STAFF

To Vancouver we send a special New Year greeting. Not that we are forgetting our other Centres overseas – all happiness in 1955 to you, Chicago, Toronto, Nova Scotia, Boston, Pittsburgh, Florida, and St. Petersburgh (U.S.A.), also Sydney, also those at home! But Vancouver is very much in our thoughts as this quarterly record is being prepared, for big changes have come to what is one of the oldest Centres in Canada, following the retirement from active work of the director, Mrs. Irene H. Moody.

Mrs. Moody has been obliged to spend some time in a nursing home, and she needs to 'slow down'. When she reminds her friends of her age, they reply: 'Don't say it – you do not look it'. But, she writes, when it is so what does it matter. 'I am an old lady, but as long as my spirit does not age, and as long as I can keep an elastic mind, I shall continue to enjoy life and poetry, and new thought.' The withdrawal of Mrs. Moody is all the more serious a loss because it is hardly a year since the death of J. G. Somerville, who, known as 'The Spinner of Beautiful Song', had endeared himself to every member.

VANCOUVER (B.C.)

'I am happy to say that our "B" Group are taking over,' writes Mrs. Moody. 'Mrs. George Maharg, 754 East Broadway, Vancouver, B.C., will be your official contact. They are doing very good work. Mostly modern, but finely finished and worth reading. About half their members are inactive because they are, or have been, "growing babies," but they will take up active work again, I am sure, because they love it. One member is mother of five boys, and still works and writes, and looks no more than an elder sister. So much for poetry!'

BOSTON (U.S.A.)

It is less than a year since we reported in *The Poetry Review* a moving celebration by the members of this enthusiastic Centre, the occasion being the seventy-ninth birthday of Charles Hammond Gibson, founder of the Branch. What a happy, if poignant, memory must now be cherished by those who attended the celebration and listened to the reading by him of his early sonnets and later verse, for he has died, rich in honours and affection, three days before his eightieth birthday.

An obituary notice in *The Times* (London) recalls Mr. Gibson's association with England. 'For a number of years he was engaged in real estate business at Boston, and in 1894 he came to England to act as secretary to Lord Northcliffe, for whom he helped to organize the Jackson-Harmsworth polar expedition of 1894–95. He was the author of a number of books of verse and contributed occasional verses to leading American and European journals.'

SUFFOLK

The President of The Poetry Society can vouch for an especially delightful experience by the Suffolk Centre in September, because he shared it as a guest. The members and friends foregathered at the unique home of Mrs. Hudson in Wickham Bishops, Essex, and during the tea interval between two afternoon sessions they were able to wander through the gardens and orchards which seemed unending – it would not be difficult to get lost among the lovely flowers and stately trees, acre after acre, everything radiant and mellow in the welcome sunlight!

Mr. Jack Lindsay, F.R.S.L., author of more than fifty novels and other books, and a recent contributor to this journal, gave a reading of his own poems and various translations by himself with a running commentary. Mr. Engleheart was in the chair, and he also presided at the October gathering, when The Butt and Oyster Inn, Pin Mill, near Ipswich, was the meeting place. Mr. Kennedy Williamson of the Editorial

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7.	Joyce Grenfell	A morning William Morris might have known
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9.	William Kean Seymour	Store of Trees
10.	William Kean Seymour	So Sceptical my Heart
11.	Arthur Vivian	Horatian Night Piece
12.	Arthur Vivian	Hope, Death and Immortality
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Board of *The Poetry Review* was the speaker. His talk was on 'Repetition as a Dramatic Device in Poetry'. Mr. Williamson's poem 'I Was Not There' has been broadcast four times, and is one of Miss Margaret Rawlings' favourites in her 'Heartsease' programmes on the radio.

WALTON AND WEYBRIDGE

That the poet George Barker would be 'strong meat' for the members and friends of this four-years-old Centre in the Surrey countryside was the warning given by Mr. Kenneth Lillington during his address in November. But he declared, nevertheless, that Barker is a modern poet worth considering. It is not surprising to learn that a spirited discussion followed in a well-attended meeting. Exactly the sort of occasion that keeps a Centre on tip-toe.

Mrs. Elsie M. Gittens wishes to remind readers of *The Poetry Review* in the neighbourhood that their membership of the Centre would be welcomed. Her address is 28 Oatlands Drive, Weybridge.

GUILDFORD

Some very interesting afternoon meetings have been held at this mid-Surrey Centre, and visits from Mr. Galloway Kyle and Mr. Michael Newlove have been greatly appreciated. Mr. Newlove read the second part of *Dauber*, by John Masefield, his earlier reading of the first part having made such an appeal to the audience that they asked for more.

Mrs. Coker, the hon. secretary (20 Lichfield Way, Guildford), asks us to make an especial appeal to poetry-lovers in the neighbourhood who have not yet taken up membership. There seem to be so many other interests for people these days that even a vitally important one like poetry and the furtherance of poetry is in danger of being overlooked.

*

And now it only remains for the Editorial Staff to wish continued success to all our Centres in 1955, including the following in addition to those already mentioned:

BELFAST

Meetings monthly, Kensington Hotel College Square. Hon. Secretary, Miss Hettie Haddock, 18 Ashley Gardens.

BRIGHTON

Mr. P. E. Dunn, 84 Eldred Avenue, Withdean, Brighton 5.

BRONDESBURY

Readings on the first Sunday of each month at 1 Mowbray Road, N.W.6, at 4 p.m. Details from Miss Silvia Newton, L.R.A.M., at the above address.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Mrs. Van den Bergh, Little Basing, Bray, Berks., and Mrs. Day, Westwood, Windsor Road, Maidenhead.

BURGESS HILL

Meetings second Saturday in each month at Mrs. Lambert's restaurant, 45 Church Road. All enquiries to Miss K. G. Boycott, 'Twemlow', Jane Lane, Burgess Hill, Sussex.

CHICAGO (U.S.A.)

President: Ruth Crary Clough, St. Clair Hotel, Chicago 11, Ill.

DUMFRIES

Mr. Irving Miller, 35 George Street, Dumfries, will answer all enquiries.

EALING

All enquiries to Mrs. Campbell, Savernake School, Astor Road, Ealing, W.5.

FLORIDA (U.S.A.)

President General: Marie Tello Phillips, 6427 Darlington Road, Pittsburgh 17, U.S.A.

GLOUCESTER

Miss Katharine N. James, 4 Beaufort Buildings, Gloucester.

THE POETRY SOCIETY

Founded 24, February 1909 :: Incorporated 18, June 1923

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

To the General Secretary,
General Offices of The Poetry Society (Incorporated),
33 Portman Square, London, W.1.

I desire to be enrolled as a member; entrance fee and first annual subscription (22/6d.) enclosed herewith.

(*The Annual Subscription becomes due and renewable on the completion of one year from the date of joining. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to The Poetry Society.*)

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Address .....

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Date .....

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The Poetry Review

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE POETRY SOCIETY
PUBLISHED SINCE 1909 QUARTERLY, PRICE 3/6

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Guaranteed Facing Matter, £15 per page and *pro rata*
Ordinary position, £12 per page and *pro rata*

Series discounts 2½% for 3, 5% for 6, 10% for 12 insertions.

Agency commission or Publishers' discount 10%
Type area 7 ins. deep by 4⅛ ins. wide. Column width 2 ins.
Block screen 85. Latest date for copy 7th preceding.
Press date 15th preceding

POETRY REVIEW,
ALDRIDGE PRESS LIMITED
27, Chancery Lane, London, W.C.2

Telegrams: Presreps. Holb. London *Telephone:* HOLborn 8655 & 8656

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KENSINGTON

Enquiries should be sent to the founder, Mr. A. Vivian Burbury, 12 Bassett Road, London, W.10. Meetings are held monthly on a Tuesday evening.

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Enquiries to Mrs. M. Riley, 20 Medina Drive, Tollerton.

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STROUD

Hon. Secretary, Miss Mary Martyn, Sunfold, Rodborough Common.

TORONTO (CANADA)

All enquiries to Mr. Thos. G. Ballantyne of Apartment 201, 58 Hillside Drive. Toronto 6. Telephone: Gerrard 8877.

THE POETRY SOCIETY: ANNUAL GENERAL BUSINESS MEETING

The Annual General Business Meeting of the Poetry Society (Incorporated) will be held at the offices of the Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1., on Wednesday, 25th May, 1955, at 3.0 p.m., to receive the annual financial statement, and elect the general members of the General Council. Names of delegates representing Centres should be sent to the General Secretary not later than 6th April, 1955, together with names of the Centre representatives on the General Council.

Admission will be made upon production of membership cards.

Any member who wishes to bring any business before the Annual Meeting must give twenty-eight days' written notice thereof to the General Secretary. Nominations for membership to the General Council must be made by two members of the General Council or three unattached members twenty-eight days prior to the Meeting.

Any member wishing to inspect the audited Statement of Accounts before the General Business Meeting may do so at this office between the hours of 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. (Saturdays excepted), or may have a copy sent on application enclosing a stamped addressed envelope after 30th April.

– By Order of the Council.

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VOLUME XLVI · NUMBER II

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*

Next Issue:

"*The Poetry Review* is firmly anchored as a kind of Royal Academy," says *The Times Literary Supplement*. Therefore we announce:

More Poems and Prose by our Young 'R.A's,' including a study of T. S. Eliot and R. M. Rilke, by Stuart Holroyd.

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TO OUR WOULD-BE CONTRIBUTORS

*

1. All MSS must have the name and address of the author stated in the top left-hand corner of the first page. If he is a member of the Society a bracketed M should be added.
2. One side only of the paper must be used.
3. Reasonable margins and top space should be left.
4. A self-addressed envelope must always be enclosed either stamped or, if an overseas contributor, the Coupon-Response International. Otherwise, no MSS will be considered. Loose stamps cannot be regarded as a substitute. Except in rare instances an introductory letter is not necessary.
5. In their own interest writers should notice that poems over thirty lines in length have a very doubtful chance of acceptance.
6. If helpful editorial suggestions are made with a returned MS, please do not reply challenging the advice. Requests for criticism, moreover, are not invited. It should be remembered that The Poetry Society already has a well-organized service for expert advice, as announced in each issue.
7. Not more than four poems should be submitted at one time. Two is an ideal number.
8. The Editorial Board does not accept responsibility for the safe custody and return of any unsolicited MSS. Authors are requested not to write expressing anxiety lest their MS is lost in the post. MSS are seldom or never lost in the post.
9. Acceptance or rejection of a MS cannot reasonably be expected until at least three months have elapsed. A decision may take longer. Inquiries by telephone cannot be dealt with.
10. The receipt of a proof does not necessarily imply immediate publication.

THESE PAGES – AN OFFERING TO

Herbert Palmer

'So when you make a poem let there be Passion . . .
A lure of thought, and not rebuff in thinking'

Prelude: THE WORLD'S GREATEST NEED

'The poor beasts, that believe in the actuality of things!' What a commentary on life, the life of man especially. The meaning behind Gustave Flaubert's mocking words is obvious. Alas, poor human beings, who neglect or belittle the greatest gift, denied to the beasts, of perceiving the reality deep behind the fact! Poverty of imagination, the inability to understand other people's thoughts and feelings – these have led to the worst evils in history. Robert Burns deplored 'Man's inhumanity to man' that makes countless thousands mourn. Every day in this age of advancement (so-called) we hear of tragedies which might have been avoided if only those responsible for them could have imagined themselves in the victim's place.

A writer in one of the daily papers, acknowledging man's debt to the imagination, has declared – with truth – that if down the ages there has been any limit to uncharitableness, callousness, and cruelty it is due to the relatively few people in every generation who have used this great gift in their approach to their fellows. 'Were it not for imagination, Sir' – Dr. Johnson might be speaking – were it not for imagination, which leads to a humane attitude to all life, a lot of things would have happened between man and man that never did.

*

If ever the peoples of the earth needed imagination it is now. And that is why The Poetry Society and kindred organizations have become more vitally important in our twentieth century civilization than ever before. It has always been the honourable duty of a nation's preachers and teachers to awaken and nourish the child's imagination, which is, after all, Nature's gift and his birthright, so that as he grows up his simple fancies may develop into the power that helps to work miracles of human feeling. Is this duty still recognized as widely as it was? Many of those who know what it means to use the imagination seem to be less spirited in their task to-day, when 'the lidless dragon

eyes of contemporary materialism' – Charles Lamb's phrase – torment more than ever our children as they become young men and women.

Thus the encouragement of poetry, which awakens and feeds the imagination, should be no longer half-hearted, but paramount in our common life. Indeed, there is little outside the fine arts to keep the imagination alive, and the lack of it has led to the ghastly fear which is bringing the world to the brink of total disaster. How fitting, therefore, that a poet should have defined imagination most vividly. In Wordsworth's poem, 'The Prelude', it is but 'another name' for 'clearest insight, amplitude of mind, and Reason in her most exalted mood.'

*

When W. B. Yeats reached artistic maturity it became his habit to revise the poems he had already thought sufficiently finished for printing, and so, as these second versions were printed in turn, the reader had the opportunity – and privilege – of following the development of a poet's mind from inexperience to finality. To emulate Yeats in this, as he emulated his predecessors, is every poet's privilege, and a revised and enlarged version of a poem by Herbert Palmer, previously published in *The Poetry Review* (April-June, 1952), appears on page 76.

"The poem is now in a more satisfactory and final shape," writes Mr. Palmer, to whom, it may be noted here, we dedicate the ensuing pages in accordance with our custom of honouring in each number a poet of the English-speaking countries whose work, devoted to his art, has won distinction.

*

Most successful – 'the happiest we have ever attended' – was the Poetry Society Luncheon for members and their friends held a year ago at the English-Speaking Union. So successful and so happy, indeed – the unanimous vote of everybody present – that it has been decided to make it an annual event each May. Turn to page 115 for this year's announcement. Urgent.

*

Before Sir Eugen Millington-Drake left this country – to our great loss – he presented a sculptured bust of Walter Owen to the school in Glasgow (Hillhead High) at which Owen was educated. 'A Scot in Argentina' was the title of a memorial article last year in *The Poetry Review* by Señor Patricio Gannon, our correspondent in Buenos Aires, and it is now followed by an illustrated brochure which Basil Blackwell, the Oxford publisher, has prepared on behalf of Walter Owen's devoted friend, Sir Eugen, whose inspiring address to the School is included. So are some selections of Owen's poems and his translations from the national sagas of Spanish-speaking lands. 'Walter Owen,' it is claimed, 'will one day be considered, in regard to Hispanic Epic Poetry, much

as Fitzgerald is considered in regard to Eastern Poetry and notably Omar Khayyam.'

*

Recently the radio critic of *The Liverpool Daily Post* contributed the following paragraph:

> Audrey Russell's voice will be heard recalling great events of the year in the Home Service's customary retrospective programme on New Year's Eve. She is selecting items from among recordings of the broadcasts she made when reporting the Commonwealth tour for the B.B.C. and since the Royal return home. I am glad Miss Russell has been afforded this distinction. Her voice is always among the most pleasing and welcome that fall on the listening ear, and as a radio reporter, she is highly adept at conveying the atmosphere of an occasion, but while observant is never intrusive.

In the nineteen-thirties Audrey Russell was twice the year's winner of The Poetry Society's Minshull Challenge Cup for Reading and Speaking Verse in Foreign Languages.

*

Verse Speaking auditions, organized by The Poetry Society, have always been one of the most important features of our work, and to-day they are more important than ever, because in this way the Society is helping the next generation to learn how to live worthily and finely. We take the opportunity of expressing our appreciation of the splendid contribution made by our official examiners.

Many of the examinations are held at 33 Portman Square, and young aspirants of all ages attend in great numbers, ever increasing, shepherded by parents and teachers. The atmosphere which inspires everyone who is associated in any way with these gatherings was so prevalent at the Annual Conference in January, of teachers who had come from every part of the country that in the official record it is declared 'the most successful' since their revival.

*

Caron Rock, who shared one of our Poetry Hour Readings last summer with Kathleen Richardson and Lesley Deane, died only two months later. The Poetry Society has learnt of her death with sorrow, and the following tribute is contributed by 'A Friend': 'She was a poet all her life. Though artistic and musical, poetry was her absorbing interest. Her friendships were many and varied. She used to say she had "never met a stranger".

'Two volumes of her poetry were published and a lyric entitled "The Lonely Greatness" appeared in many anthologies here and in America. She did much verse-speaking, especially during her lunch-hour readings at the Savoy Chapel Royal. She took a diploma in

verse-speaking, and was awarded the Gold Medal of The Poetry Society in 1933. Her recent articles in *The Voice of Youth* had distinction. When she died Caron Rock was seventy, but her charm and vitality were such that no one ever thought of her as old.'

It is with regret that we also inform members of the death of Hallam Fordham, in India. Members will remember his splendid readings for us, particularly his sympathetic production of *Everyman*, Christmas 1952. His natural charm, generous understanding, and overall kindness, will be missed by his friends at The Poetry Society.

*

Mr. A. Ralph Korn, a deep lover of poetry and a distinguished American, whose name is now familiar to readers of *The Poetry Review* as a generous donor and a Vice-President, has inaugurated a valuable contest for which poets everywhere are eligible. A hundred dollars cash prize will be awarded to honour New York State Poetry Day, 15th October next, for the best poem, limit thirty-two lines, any subject.

We urge our poet-readers to try their hand, so to say, submitting their work (limited to one poem) anonymously in triplicate, the author's name and address to accompany the MS in a sealed envelope. All poems to be unpublished and typewritten. Deadline, 1st October, 1955, to Lane Van Hook, director of Korn Contest, 1955, 154, Pearsall Drive, Mount Vernon, New York.

*

Important. Have you turned to Page 115?

*

Postscripts. – Sir Francis Meynell and the President of The Poetry Society are two of the judges appointed for the George Crabbe bicentenary prize competition for a poem about life in Suffolk . . . Announcements of the result of our Lilian Bowes Lyon competition and the prize-winning essay on 'The Book that has Influenced Me' will be made in our next number . . . Sir Eugen Millington-Drake is returning to this country in May, until August . . . Walter de la Mare has been elected to the American Academy and National Institute of Art and Letters . . . THE EDITORIAL BOARD

TO MEMBERS WHO ARE AUTHORS

A small and permanent Exhibition of Books written by Members of The Poetry Society is about to be arranged in the Hall at 33 Portman Square. All Members who are Authors are invited to deposit one copy of each or any of their works in poetry or relating to poetry with the General Secretary and Registrar (Mrs. Graddon) for inclusion in this Exhibition.

DESPAIR FOR GOD AND THE ATOM

NICHOLAS BRUYNS

Autumn has come a season in my mind.
I look to the pallor of pain in the skies,
And at my feet I gaze upon the dust of dreams
Gathered with the leaves by a sad wind blown.
I kneel where the tall trees stand,
My peace broken in ruins of light,
My prayers spilt from a rosary of stars
That faith had threaded to the night –
And on my lips is the taste of dust
From dead words.

It is this fear denuded of hope
That wraps my thoughts around the will
Afraid in a dark back lane of the mind –
And God! This sob in the bitter wind.

It is the burial kiss.
Or consider it the birth
Of the sick-divided self –
Despair of a psychopath.

But is there a schizophrenic atom?
And what of time split in season,
And emotion split from the balance of reason,
And the sky split from calm to storm,
And the tall trees beautiful stripped to the bone?
What left is there living that is whole?

Perhaps that which is unlike the world.

When hope was brave I would have told
Of belief in the fairies' laughter.
But now the worldly eyes speak doubt;
And mine also; but not of that,
But of faith –
Could there come the spring again
To clothe the ragged hearts of men –
And flower in them as lovely thought?
Yes . . . say the priests with starved oratory . . .
If the troubled atom be left to God!

THREE POEMS

JOHN SMITH

LOVE STORY

FOR JACK AND ANN-MARI FINCH

The hours moving
For this one, for that one,
The same moon rising, the same unremarkable sun.

The words spoken
With the same dumbness,
The half-living, half-feeling, half-waking numbness,

Till at last, at last,
The first and fatal meeting,
The fearful delirium in the blood, the furious heart-beating.

Then the hours not moving
Nor the world turning
Nor the same moon glowing, nor the sun burning,

But the entire world's meaning,
Unknowable, suddenly known,
And stars carolling in winter trees for them alone;

The silence broken
By cries striking through dumbness;
The swift blood pulsing, melting the heart's numbness

In fires eclipsing
The ordinary sun
By sudden loving of this one, of that one.

THE EXPECTANT AIR AWAITS THE QUICKENING VOICE

The expectant air awaits the quickening voice
Without which it is dead, of lark or linnet,
Or, since the dusk is come, the appropriate choice
Of nightingale to light her flame within it.
Without some song the air like ashes lies
Barren and grey as deserts, small and dry,

And where we look grows harsh upon our eyes,
The fields unsweet, unhallowed the grave sky.
But as, like Lazarus feeling the spirit flowing
With liquid fire once more through those dead limbs,
At last the song burst forth, the whole world glowing
With rapturous life, flowers in miraculous hymns;
Sing, sing, dark bird! The listening air awakes;
And see! The stars dash out where midnight's beauty breaks.

A FANFARE FOR MIDSUMMER DAY

FOR NORA KAY

Flame out, flame out elaborate and gaudy day,
Unlock your tongues of terrible green fire,
Astonish with gold suns the trumpeting air;
Dazzled by so much beauty let even time stay,
Struck still and breathless in the world's great desire
Whose sovereign will is that all things declare:
Never was day more blessed than this day fair.

Gorgeous as mating peacocks land and sky
Spread your fantastic fantails to our sight,
Bind, bind up earth and heaven, and so amaze
Our startled eyes where fabulous pennants fly
Like storks upon the wind for our delight;
So may we tell by such rich natural ways
All things give tongue to carol summer's praise.

Let rains of radiant sunlight splash with gold
The emerald acres, till a glistering sea
Gilds all the country ways, and birds of fire
Unlock their lyric throats and madrigal songs unfold
Of beauty before unknown, high jubilee,
Until the mute stones sing and flinty mouths aspire
To join their prisoned tongues with that rare choir.

Bless then bright sun your own meridian day
With crowns of light more choice than we may fashion;
Garland the darling air with gems of light;
Let no chill hand or weeping cloud betray
The bounty of your heart or mock our passion;
And when the small birds cease may our good night
From your gold mirror glean reflected light.

Be for one day, one night, green world, all fair:
Original Eden glittering in our heart.
Let Icarus' wings enfold you, Phaeton fly
Unharmed, an angel burning in burning hair,
Bright sun-God charging heaven in his gold cart;
And let the small stars play in the big sky
Till the night gleams with dawn in whose red birth they die.

LYME NOCTURNE

G. D. MARTINEAU

In breath-held hush, the half-moon poised her blade,
Whose argent lustre walked a spell-bound sea
Across grey-bastioned silence, till she laid
An aisle of light – while, in the south wall's lea,
One blood-red eye kept vigil from the quay.

A single star, above the bay's bright arc,
Brought fellowship to some pale flame below –
The lonely lantern of an anchored barque,
Out there to eastward of that silver glow
Whose witchery stilled the toilsome ebb and flow.

Night's jewelled weapon halted hurrying Time,
Bidding him stand, while, with a lambent ore,
She decked the sleeping ocean-face of Lyme,
And turned that mighty water's ageless roar
To bat-winged whispers flitting down the shore.

A visioned silence, clear as Dian's flame,
Embraced the bay, and stole away a span,
A nutshell moment, reft beyond reclaim,
While down the cruel glass no longer ran
Those fevered sands that measure life to man.

A dream it was – but here the dream is caught,
Within these towers of gracious cliff embayed –
That Time stood still, in shivered, silent thought,
Before the goddess of the gleaming blade,
His chariot-wheels by strong enchantment stayed.

THE ALBATROSS

From the French of Charles Baudelaire: for Margaret Rawlings

JOHN REDWOOD-ANDERSON

Often will idle sailors, to beguile their ease,
take captive albatrosses, huge birds of the deep,
indolent voyagers that, over the caverned seas,
follow the gliding vessel on stretched wings asleep.

But scarcely have their feet touched deck, than these sky-kings
lose all their royal skill and, with their skill, all pride,
and piteously let their white and shining wings,
like useless oars adrift, trail one on either side.

This wingèd traveller, how blundering now! how weak!
He, late so beautiful, a clown to all that crew!
One, teasing, offers him a cutty for his beak;
another, limping, mocks the cripple that once flew.

This is the poet's image, this sovereign of the clouds,
this haunter of the storm, that scorns the archer's aim!
Exiled upon the ground amid the shouting crowds,
crushed by the weight of giant wings, he stumbles – lame.

LAMENT OF AN ARTIST

(To a difficult sitter)

OLIVE GORDON HASLUCK

What magic lacks my brush, that I must strive
With so much diligence, such scant success
To limn your features, in life so alive,
Transferred to canvas, dead and meaningless?
Whose is the fault? I delve with patient hope
Beneath the crusted surface of your brain
To find a kindred thought, but chilled, I grope
Unhappily to still a deeper plane.
Your soul escapes me, the essential you
Flees in retreat before my seeking eye,
How can I form a portrait clear and true
When in some secret cave concealed you lie?
If you would but respond, the world might see
A masterpiece to grace posterity!

SONG OF SPIRIT AND SOUL

HERBERT PALMER

Body, consciousness, spirit and soul!
Man is *four* when divided his whole.
But agnostics for 'soul' affirm 'mind',
Yet nearly the same – intertwined.

A plant ranks the lowest, say *one*.
Does it feel as it greens in the sun?
For a bird or a beast reckon *two*.
Man doubles – turns red into blue.

Poets' licence writes spirit or soul
As it wills when the harp has control.
But Man's spirit is fastened to God,
To survive when he marries the sod.

At the grave the sharp essence remains;
Though the soul dissolves with the brains
The spirit aspires and ascends
Or goes where the tunnel-foot wends.

We shall sink if the spirit be base,
If we thwarted and darkened God's grace.
We shall rise if the spirit be pure,
Or we sought to uplift and endure.

Will it die, cut away from its goal? –
The Eternal made base by the soul . . .
Nay, from terrible depths it can rise –
On a rope twined of longings and sighs.

We are fettered to radiance and flame.
We are smoke on the billows of shame,
But the essence of being endures
Though the substance impedes and obscures.

We exist, and we always shall *be*;
We are blind, but the spirit will see;
The lenses and eyes of the mind
Are too dull for the vistas behind.

But the ether will bloom as a rose
When the shutters of selfhood unclose,
When the dust from the eyeballs is blown
And the spirit returns to its own,

When in freedom we know and are one
With the light of the stars and the sun,
With the passion of music and flower,
All that mirrors ineffable power,

All that mirrors far beauty and might,
Here seen like a face in the night,
Now discerned not as kernel but husk
Though it shines in the star-sprinkled dusk.

But we each shall be each in that whole
As it was with the earth-bodied soul
When the soul and the spirit were wed
And they lay, as is now, in one bed.

DIRGE FOR A PEDIGREE CAT*

PAUL SELVER

This little world of ours where she abode
Aloofly, since it began, is chill and lorn.
For she has gone from us and now we mourn
The living lustre quenched which she bestowed.

Yes, she has gone from us. Her soul has fled,
Leaving a husk. No more will she entrance
Every beholder with her topaz glance,
Her queenly poise and her fastidious tread.

Her gleeful kittenhood flashed nimbly past.
We watched her frolic urge too soon decay.
Her spells of sleep grew longer, till at the last
Amid a dream her spirit ebbed away.

Yet why lament? Why maul the wincing heart?
For we shall, even so, too soon depart.

**Editorial Note. — This was the cat whose "musings" were printed in* The Poetry Review, *July — September, 1953. R.I.P.*

FOUR POEMS

JOHN GRADDON

THE BALLET DANCER

I mime my part
Without a voice to dress
The gesture in a tone of gold.

Caress, from your impulsive heart,
The lovely flicker of your soul's unrest;
Warming within a focused stage
The letters of a story's page.

So are we one
Within a moment's grief;
So do we die and so,
In rapture, live.

A MOMENT PARTED FROM ETERNITY

Dismiss all images.

Let naught so urgent as a thought
Trespass this still moment.

Dismiss all memories.

This moment is beyond comparison,
Unseasoned with association,
Unmarked by Time.

Dismiss all else.

Dismiss not me.

'THE TIDES FLOW AS MY BLOOD'

The tides flow as my blood.
When you are gone from me
There must be, somewhere,
Enraptured seas storming
An inaccessible star.

'THOUGH ALL MY WARES BE TRASH – '

I can never forget; but perhaps, one day;
Someday when Time's a lichened memory,
I might look back, objectively –
We stood, but did not seem to stand;
We thought, but did not need to speak;
We saw, but did not understand
The other lives that drifted by our feet.

With us had come all the solitary magic of our meetings.
With us, the trumpet and drums that herald the passing of the pilgrim.
With us, the background choir like an ivory screen in cathedral light.
Our light shone from high naved, stained rose windows.
Round and about us was the safety of quartered indifferent shields.

The scabrous groping fingers of mist clutched the edges of our life,
but you leaned against the clammy chromium bar
and your upturned face held morning light beneath the bone.
Green and amber lights and arrows starred the gloom,
but your mouth was the melting promiscuous noonday sun.
Brazen trains crackled snakily to forsaken destinations,
but your hair was like wet sand running to meet the returning evening tide.

I saw your eyes and
there were moorhens treading waterlilies.

I saw your eyes and
the sun was singing through the birds.

I saw your eyes and
a yellow sunflower turned shyly to Van Gogh.

I saw your eyes and
a mustard field lay in the lap of a heliotrope mountain.

I saw your eyes and
the sun lay on magnolia, camelia and apple blossom.

I saw your eyes and
a purring cat lapped bluish fire-sprinkled milk.

I can never forget and not even someday,
Not even when Time's a blackened memory,
Could I look back – regretfully –

ECLOGUE OF NORTHERN BLIZZARD

W. H. HAMILTON

Earth is bleak to-day,
Sleet is driving southward vilely,
Hurricane with hateful ravage
Rends the tree-tops.

Gruesome lours the air
Dark and thick with stormy menace,
Deep as deadly battle, rattling
Roof and chimney.

Ice and snow impede
Passage o'er our bolstered highways:
Bare the shattered cottage-gardens,
Latched the door-cheeks.

Slush and mud prevail;
Shivers brute and humans shudder –
Sheep e'en shun the purple turnips
Flung for fodder.

Frozen toes and ears
Sneak to cosy kitchen-ingles
Where we browse o'er vivid volumes
As the flames leap:

Or, from *ennui* sore,
Wander to the empty parlour,
There to trifle at the keyboard
Of old spinet.

Coffee rich and hot
Bides our chiefest creature comfort . . .
Why, the very cerebellum
Seems congealing!

Wrapped in blankets warm,
Fain we'd spend our total winter
Heedless as the sheltering dormouse
Where she slumbers.

O for April's days
Fresh with blossom sweet and greening,
Warm with living blue and promise
Swift of summer!

Mavises are mute.
Ne'er a merry blackbird warbles,
Boldly only Robin-redbreast
Seeks our window,

Thankful for our crumbs
Or some juicy rind of bacon,
Proving paladin ensample
To us cravens.

Duty bids us forth?
Very well, brave heart, so be it!
Sure, in farther South Antarctic
Task were harder.

There's a bluff delight
Found in facing difficulties,
So we can, with Spartan prowess,
Overcome 'em.

Smeddum be the word
Of our sturdy rustic slogan.
Never knew we direr rigours
Than could worsen.

Not for aye endures
Dreary, surly, dull December.
Sing we, 'Jolly, jolly Summer
Is i-cumen!'

CAN WE HELP YOU?

The answer is Yes to any Member who is anxious for the best advice about his or her work. The Poetry Society established a CRITICAL SERVICE some years ago, and writers are invited to make use of it.

Two poems may be submitted for criticism and help, for a minimum fee of 5s. The Charge for the criticism of each additional poem (under 100 lines) is 2s. It is particularly requested that all poems submitted should be typed and that a stamped addressed envelope be enclosed.

AT THE EXHIBITION

JOAN M. FARRAND

Ah, she is beautiful – the figurine –
A dainty damosel in limpid green.
For me? Oh no, Sir, I could not accept;
Ah well, if you insist. (He almost wept.)

Did he love her perhaps?
It could be she died.
No doubt if I tried
I could fill in the gaps.

If he loved her then why
Give her image to me?
Could it possibly be
He divined then that I . . .

But no, he's just a sculptor, cannot guess
The barren winter of the soul's distress
That makes of my life, too, a wilderness.

FIRST LOVE

FREDERICK BRATTON

I dared not utter to you words of love
  But stared before the beauty of your face,
As softly voiced and gentle as a dove
  You gave yourself at last to my embrace.
When you had gone what mystery to find
  Myself as if by some bewitching spell
Transfixed within a lover's restless mind
  Where the delights of joy and anguish dwell!
No words of mine can adequately frame
  The melody of that enchanting hour
When you were present and my world became
  A dancing star filled full of magic power.
Should there by chance be greater beauty still
Then other eyes than mine must justly fill.

SOFT YOU NOW, THE FAIR OPHELIA!

THOMAS MOULT *

The green hush of an English Sunday lay on the River Avon while I sat gazing across to the willows and chestnuts flowering above the opposite bank and mirrored in sunlight below it. A white swan moved slowly past me, a ghost, an echo without a sound, from the Stratford of long ago! Soundless, too, the rowing boats which came and went, completing the waterscape as fitly as Shakespeare himself would have wished, a golden lass at the helm, a golden lad at the prow – and surely that little island of trees in the background was a bit of Arden, surely the pastoral scene, spread sleepily beyond it, the parks and orchards of Navarre, or Illyrian distances!

Sabbath is the fitting time for one's arrival at Stratford-upon-Avon, because then it is more truly the home of Shakespeare, unspoilt by week-day trafficking and exploiting, nor cluttered up with Ye Olde manifestations of barter, greed, and fake. In the streets I might move among genuine Warwickshire people, with Warwickshire voices; they wander there in the old vacant fashion because this is the nearest centre to their villages, Welcombe and Wilmcote, Drayton and Shottery, and an English town is like a magnet to countrymen who are only free once a week. It is on Sunday that the Shakespearean of to-day, strolling along the Stratford pavements, may meet Dogberry to the life, or Lancelot Gobbo or the First Clown (with a spade). Not on a week-day is it possible for one's eyes to go straight to the immortals. Any "foreigner" from an industrial city, any alien from overseas - how little permanence have these by comparison with Shakespeare's men and women, rawbones and comics and country wenches with the Warwickshire earth in their make-up even though they drew breath in London? For once, indeed, I would hardly see any trippers and tourists from other parts of England and overseas, who throng the pavements to do their sightseeing on shopping days, a quarter-million of them each year between April and September, from sixty-five nations and colonies!

Therefore the tea-house that is claimed as the birthplace or residence of this or that distant relative of the only notable in all the Shakespeare clan, and the shop whose enticements are cunningly linked for trading purposes with the aforesaid notable – these false-face examples of nonsense that greet us at every turn from Monday to Saturday do not impertinently obtrude, vexing the spirit and trying the temper of scholar and would-be scholar, this one day in seven. Even the official guide in yonder church, where Shakespeare's bones have lain for three

* To Marjory Garland in memory of Dr. Herbert Garland.

hundred years, has halted for a while the show-talk which includes the queer claim that Shakespeare ended his days as a churchwarden! How we English love to put top-hats and frock-coats on our heroes, even the most rampageous!

The glittering oars that dipped and swung and passed before me did not carry the rowing youths and their fair passengers much further along that tree-lined river. Soon it would drop to a lower level by way of a six-foot waterfall, and if I had risen up from my garden-seat to follow the boats a dozen yards would bring me full into the roar of the tumbling stream, deadened by foliage where I sat; and I would have seen a boat pulled round full-circle as it approached the ancient mill-wall with its stain of flour-dust at the window ledges marking the many generations of millers who have loaded the bulging white sacks into the barge beneath.

And back the golden lad and lass would glide, on their return journey, vanishing the way they came, swiftly hidden by the leafy bend of the Holy Trinity graveyard that bordered the river on my left, and, in front of me, the lovely garden where I lingered. Had I followed them this time I could have stepped over the low ivied wall among the tombs . . . just as Shakespeare the youth may have done – yes truly, for what is Ophelia's burial scene in the play but a recaptured memory of his own young experience! I thought of him then, a shy lad standing yonder, hidden by a mossy gravestone, observing a sad procession that wound from the distant gates of the churchyard and down among the dark yew-trees to an open grave . . . just as Prince Hamlet did:

> But soft! but soft, awhile: here comes the king.
> The queen, the courtiers: who is this they follow?
> And with such maimed rites? This doth betoken
> The corse they follow did with desperate hand
> Fordo its own life: 'twas of some estate.
> Couch we awhile, and mark.

Shakespeare would know the whole Stratford scene by heart.

Doubtless at the riverside he listened to the nightingales, and watched the May-blossom and the wild rose break into life, their petals fluttering to the grass and lingering there like butterflies.

Doubtless he lay on the bank and idly dreamed as he stared towards the old grey mill and the miles beyond, recalling his dream when, later on in London, he wrote *As You Like It* and spoke with the tongue of Charles the Wrestler:

> They say he is already in the forest of Arden, and many a merry man with him: and there they live like the old Robin Hood of England: they say many young gentlemen flock to him every day, and fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world.

And who knows! – the tiny island yonder that the picnic-boatmen go

floating past may have looked so big to the juvenile Shakespeare that it came back to his mind as he created the inaccessible island in *The Tempest*, cut off from civilization, full of 'sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not.'

How it thrills the imaginative man of to-day to say to himself: 'This, for a certainty, is the unchanged scene that Shakespeare knew, three hundred and fifty years ago! . . . ' A poet of our time, Joseph Auslander, begins a poem with: 'Is this the lark Lord Shakespeare heard?' Yes, I would answer, reminded of it by the flight of a tiny speck into the sunset sky, rising and soaring above the fields opposite the playhouse, that stands a little way past the church on my side of the river. And when in those same fields I have watched a sheep-shearing – I am strangely moved to think that Shakespeare saw it too!

It must have been somewhere in these Stratford meadows, once separating the river from the little town, that Shakespeare plighted his troth with Anne Hathaway. Fateful day – and fatal sequel. Ere long he was driven by his daemon from wife and home to, materially speaking, a wider world and his triumph not only over his own brief years but all the years.

That fleeting time of childhood, boyhood, and youth, and then the four autumnal seasons after the blaze of high summer, a genius in honoured retirement – it is for this that most people have coupled Shakespeare and Stratford-upon-Avon; it is for this that a massive playhouse has been built and rebuilt in his memory. But the essential Stratford is not composed of outward shapes, as I remind myself when I feel like believing that he went to the Grammar School and other glorified places. The mind of thoughtful men has built it, and each lover of Shakespeare's writings builds afresh, on a foundation of knowledge and understanding acquired through reading and studying the books, witnessing and studying whatever may live again through theatre-craft.

A tremendous occasion, therefore, was that troth-plighting to a woman eight years older than he, perhaps on the very spot where now the Memorial Theatre stands, and where, as John Brophy persuades us in his story, *Gentleman of Stratford*, young Will went walking inattentively, 'paying no heed to the plaintive noise of the cows and sheep close at hand but mist-hidden,' coming 'almost to the brink of the river, the pollarded willows ranged along the bank stirring softly,' their branches 'pencilled dark against the silver-grey and white of the mist drifting past.' All his life and all his plays revealed their subtle yet vital influence. For a while he looked back bitterly. 'I would there were no age between sixteen and three-and-twenty, or that youth would sleep out the rest!' Such was the shepherd's wish in *The Winter's Tale*, and he goes on to suggest what mischief

brewed while youth was not asleep but hotly awake . . . Even in *The Tempest,* which is believed to be the last play of all, when Miranda asked: 'Sir, are not you my father?' Prospero-Shakespeare parried: 'Thy mother was a piece of virtue and she said thou wast my daughter.' . . .

The very sights and smells and noises of Stratford must have been apple-sour to him on the rare occasions when he returned on a summer visit, the London theatre being closed for the season – we know nothing of what he must have felt during his re-encounters with 'that piece of virtue', his wife – but when, towards the end, he went back and finally settled down at New Place a marvellous thing happened. He who had felt little except bitterness at Stratford-upon-Avon, fell in love with it!

'Shakespeare fell in love with Stratford,' writes Professor Dover Wilson, 'with its memories, its quiet pastures and wide skies, with all the wild life of bird and beast, and flower, with the pleasant friendships and domesticities of the little town, with his house and garden, with his own family, and especially perhaps with Judith, his younger daughter.'

And when, on that Sabbath evening in May, I went indoors (falling asleep to the music of nightingales) I felt that there was one more thing to be done if I would fittingly complete the picture I was laying up in my heaven. At the Memorial Theatre a different play is presented every night, and *The Tempest* was announced for the next performance. And so next day (wakened at the blackbird's call) I read it again as I wandered through the birthplace (as a hundred thousand others do each year) and sat in the quiet, beautiful grounds of the only other building regarded by literary authorities these many generations as genuine Shakespeare – the house, now vanished, in which he spent that blissful retirement. It must have been there that he wrote his final play; and there, far from London, at peace after storm, his love transfigured him.

A life-long bitterness melted away; his spirit grew tender again at the thought of what compassion, reconciliation, forgiveness were possible to men and women. *Forgive, forgive, forgive* – such is the theme of *The Tempest,* and through this fixed idea he achieved 'that serene and blessed mood in which the affections gently led him on.'

It was right and proper, therefore, that as theatre-time drew near I should take the short cut from my hotel through the silent and deserted churchyard and across the sunlit greensward that bounded the Avon and so to the playhouse for this very work. In the busy foyer I studied the advertisements of the season's productions. Each of them, somehow, brought into this worthy home of immortal genius something of the spirit which I felt here and there in Stratford-upon-Avon, especially manifest on that apron-stage of colour and light, wit and

beauty, the spirit which changed Shakespeare from bitter to blessed, inspiring him to round off his marvellous life in a brave new world of forgiving and forgetting, harmony and love. What magic there must be in those few miles of Warwickshire and England, to have thus transformed the greatest of men, greatest of all mankind.

At the end of the performance I strolled back to my lodging by the roundabout way of Hugh of Clopton's venerable bridge that a harassed Shakespeare crossed when he left the town for London, back along the other bank of the Avon through the sun-soaked twilight of nightingales and apple-blossom, and I thought: If only we lesser mortals could be touched by that same magic – the magic of old Stratford, where 'the air breathes upon us here most sweetly,' to-day as ever . . . For then, however little it affected our material stature, we would say *Forgive, forgive, forgive.*

LINES TO A POET

JOHN BARRON MAYS

These words are windows to your mind
Where I, in wonder gazing through
Their clearest crystal, joy to find
This public yet so private view.

For he who looks within may scan
Through the faint mist of mortal breath
The passions of immortal man,
The few great themes of love and death;

Eternal beauty, grace and truth
Without distortion or pretence,
And wisdom that outpaces youth
And faith and holy innocence.

You speak for all of us with more
Passion and fire so that we can
Release through you the long pent store
Of beauty locked in every man.

You need no modern mode to hold
The lyric sweetness of your tongue;
When other centuries grow old
Your words shall live, you will be young!

A POET'S LAMENT

JOHN LUCAS

Summer's rich murmur sees my soul destroyed,
Poised is my pen; it waits, I know not why,
My words strike phrases vacant as a void,
Culling no passion from the singing sky.

A thousand thoughts proclaim their urgent themes,
A thousand epithets, and each a rhyme
– For others; yet this wastrel pen just dreams,
And watches borrowed hours wing back to Time.

LETTER FROM THE FRENCH ALPS

MARGUERITE MUNSON

To-day we climbed a pass, leaving below –
(Thrown on the valley floor as by a child
Who tires of play) a village. High and steep
The road ran, 'twixt the banks of vetch,
Borage and wet-lashed marguerites. How cold
It was! We walked upon the clouds; no bird
Whistled, but the rocky galleries rang
With sudden terror, as a mountain fox
Fled, his white brush streaming, and small stones
Rattled a little, down the mountain-side –
Then awful stillness, like the peace of death.
Aloft, great peaks, cleaving the floor of heaven –
An icy armoury. Beneath, around,
A wilding carpet – cup and waxen bell,
Corolla, anther, glistening with rime,
Each gem set in a frosty filigree,
Moss-cushioned – and I gathered some for you.

To-night we halted at a little inn,
And after supper, when the dusk fell (swift
As a dropt curtain), made our way to bed.
I flung the casement wide to catch the scent
Of thyme and lavender. Amid the peaks,
Muted, the thunder rolled. Above, new stars
Burned, as did the old familiar Plough
Which trembles at *our* lattice; then I knew
That as I looked, so you did, with my eyes;
And, comforted, I slept and dreamed of home.

INTO FULL DAYLIGHT — C. DAY LEWIS

P. D. CUMMINS

When a distinguished poet announces that he is about to bring out his collected verse, anticipation is inevitably clouded by the uneasy feeling that he may in effect be writing *Finis* to his career. The publication of Cecil Day Lewis's collected poems,* however, not only dispelled that fear, but enabled us to see for ourselves the emergence of this poet into full daylight. The stress is on the word 'full', for, while the near-perfection of his craftsmanship has long been recognized, it was not until this book appeared that it became possible to trace the rising curve of his particular genius from its earliest flowering to its present maturity, and so to assess the measure of his achievement.

To follow Day Lewis's progress step by step is both a moving and a heartening experience, the more so in that it was begun – the date of his first long sequence is 1929 – at a time when the feverish lights which had been kindled after the first World War were guttering out one by one into a deepening darkness. As the weeks passed, the air grew heavier and heavier with foreboding, until even the most insensitive could not but realize that they were blundering through the miasmas of the wasteland towards inescapable catastrophe. In such an atmosphere those poets who voiced the increasing anxieties of the people could not avoid the marriage of idealism to political ideology, a marriage of two incompatibles which ran the danger of ending in that facile despair which is complete negation. The authentic poet, however, is positive, and since he cannot create in a void, he retains, consciously or unconsciously, those values which no material circumstances can destroy. It is significant, therefore, that Mr. Day Lewis should have given his first important work the title of *Transitional Poem*. With this blind act of faith, he left behind him the shallow slough of despond, and took the first upward step on a long and immensely difficult road.

In 1931 *Transitional Poem* was followed by *From Feathers to Iron*, a markedly better sequence from the point of view of technique, and one in which Mr. Day Lewis's sensitive lyrical quality was immediately perceptible. Behind the delicacy of his work, however, there lay a strength which ensured, even at that date, its survival, a strength that manifested itself in an instinctive belief in the potentiality for good in man. *From Feathers to Iron* is both a love poem and an invocation to an unborn child, written at a time when the poet was conditioned to the maddeningly reiterated 'no go' of the bagpipe music and when it was impossible for him to summon up any easy optimism. Nevertheless, while he could not shut out the deadly jangle, there was that in him

* *Collected Poems* – 1954, by C. Day Lewis (Jonathan Cape and the Hogarth Press) 21s.

which refused to allow him to accept it in its entirety. Thus, in the eighteenth poem in this sequence, while he voices all his fears for the child-to-be, foresees for it nothing but disaster, he welcomes its advent, and ends in asking himself whether, in spite of everything, it may not be:

> A white hope shall preserve
> From flatterers, pimps and fakes,
> Integrity and nerve?

Here we have even greater evidence of an upward step taken by a poet to whom, from this point, the word 'dedicated' can be applied – dedicated because, while the shadows were closing in, his faith in humanity strengthened and deepened. Inevitably, his poems evidenced these shadows, yet in *Overtures to Death*, an agonized cry imploring mankind to save itself before it was too late, we find Mr. Day Lewis, aware though he was that it was *already* too late, writing this:

> When they have lost the little that they looked for,
> The poor allotment of ease, custom, fame;
> When the consuming star their fathers worked for
> Has guttered into death, a fatuous flame;
> When love's a cripple, faith a bed-time story,
> Hope eats her heart out and peace walks on knives,
> And suffering men cry an end to this sorry
> World of whose children want alone still thrives;
> Then shall the mounting stages of oppression
> Like maze and makeshift scaffolding torn down
> Reveal his unexampled, best creation –
> The shape of man's necessity full-grown.
> Built from their bone, I see a power-house stand
> To warm men's hearts again and light the land.

Faith for him, at least, was no 'bedtime story'; in the darkness, it was a fixed star by whose light he set down his testament of belief.

Of the poems written when the world conflict was raging, very few can be classified as actual war poems, and indeed he is not at his best when he deals directly with a war theme. He himself has supplied one reason for this in 'Where are the War Poets?':

> It is the logic of our times,
> No subject for immortal verse –
> That we who lived by honest dreams
> Defend the bad against the worse.

There was, of course, another reason. Like all sensitive people he was aware that the laurels of victory could not but be sere, and that peace would indeed 'walk on knives'. Nevertheless, in 1953, after peace had limped along for eight years on torn and bloody feet, he wrote his finest poem, and the final one in this collection, *An Italian Visit*, which

contains within its colloquial framework some of the loveliest lyrics in the English language. Although it is only possible to hint at its breadth and scope, two short extracts from a conversation that takes place at the airport will be enough to show how unerringly the poet sees the plight in which all thinking men and women find themselves. While there is

> No law to say we must grind the cornfields into vitamins,
> Reduce the grape to a formula, express the olive in terms of
> Modern statistics . . .

we do it because we belong to a generation

> Whose only faith is the piling of fact on fact in the hope that
> Some day a road may be built of them and may lead somewhere . . .

Here, in a few lines of verse, we have the modern dilemma. The poet found his way out of it by returning to the classic art of the past, a return that took him immeasurably forward. *An Italian Visit* not only shows us Cecil Day Lewis in the full strength of maturity, it also enables us to see to what heights he has ascended and – the greatest tribute that can be paid to his work – the heights beyond them to which he will yet ascend.

THE HILL OF FERN

JOHN SIBLY

The clump of pine, ragged on ragged sky,
And the scent of the fern coming freshly after the rain –
As it came a year ago, a year that I
Seem not to have lived till I smelt the fern again.

Where the foxglove swings its smitten belfry of bloom
And the lurid heather quickens its moor of night
Under the blaze of the brief, the prodigal broom
With an instant perfume cancels the whole year's flight.

Till the bracken that clad the hill with its rust is green,
An earlier bee burdens the foxglove lip,
The broom that burns where another broom has been
In a moment lets past, present, and future slip

Till I am nought but the lasting scent of the fern
Created briefly anew in its chalice of flesh
With heath and pine on a hill where the seasons burn
Bright in the gorse, and the fern-scent comes afresh.

I HOLD THE FABLED ASPHODEL

PAMELA CLEAVER

I hold the fabled Asphodel in my astonished hand,
Here, in this flowered island, where the goddess chose to land
At Paphos, on a morning when the white gulls skimmed the foam
And stepping from her scallop shell, and the sea that was her home,
The bright-haired Aphrodite stood, unseen by mortal man,
Felt the firm smoothness with her toes, then for delight she ran.
She ran across this golden bay, that ever is her own,
To fields where the pale-starred Asphodel, from then till now, has grown.

CHALICE

MARGARET STANLEY-WRENCH

A little cup, no wider than two hands
Joined in prayer, no broader than a heart.
Made from silver, muted by many years,
And worn and fingered to mild, rain-water softness.
Moulded, chased, incised with wavering patterns
In a village workshop, where the loud sound of the sea
Beat like a heart that pounded steady on the shingle shore.

When the silver that made it lay molten in the fire
A handful of houses huddled under the wind
Here, at the end of the world. The scars and smoke
From fires in which men died still blackened walls,
And up and down the seas, their sails like flowers,
The Spanish ships moved heavily as bulls.
And a queen of fire and amber ruled a land
Whose future lay ahead, white as the unmapped world.

A little cup, yet love and awe both shaped it,
And still in love and awe it is lifted up
By hands that tremble with humility,
Knowing it holds God's self, that here He dies
And lives again. And through this cup, each one
Who takes Him, kneeling in love, neighbour by friend,
Is linked, made one with those who over the years
Build up a chord of praise, the living and the dead.

(The Chalice still in use at St. Peter's church, Selsey, is of local manufacture, dated 1568).

IN SMOKY STREETS

STANLEY MASON

In smoky streets at one o'clock
Their cold back prop
The factory wall;
Where drab trams crawl
And wail and stop
On the worn rail, their twisted feet
Shuffle and wait in awkward rows
Until the sullen whistle blows
And each one bows his head before
The lord and master of his fate
And shuffles through the shabby door.

And shuffles through the shabby year,
Accepting its coercive truths,
The daily food, the daily fear,
The clamorous
Cold children's mouths,
The scolding wife, the failing breath,
The winter stiffening in the flesh,

Till to the last and longest shift,
Still unestranged,
Each shuffles through death's darker door,
Obedient as a candle snuffed,
In poverty, and unavenged.

THE BLACKBIRD

CELIA RANDALL

The spray moves but the blackbird is gone,
Only within my thought the picture stays,
He has flown on to make another pattern
Down other ways.

Yet he has left for mind's embellishment
His image stamped on an eternal now,
His liquid rapture frozen on the ether,
This vibrant bough.

THE LOST SEASON

EDMUND COOPER

Midwinter sunlight cuts the sky;
the cold air blazes without heat;
black fingers of the crouching trees
provoke a rumour of defeat.

Last year's nest refused to fall,
is skeletoned against the sun.
A fledgeling dashed against the roots
left neither flesh nor bone.

To-morrow's gift of frost or rain
deploys the problem of desire –
the face pressed to the window pane;
the orange shadow in the fire.

But still, outside, the frozen soil
responds like rock beneath the feet.
Behind, the frosty moorlands rise –
a lost, green ancestry of peat.

SINGAPORE WINTER

H. V. ROSE

I

I love the cold high places where
The brown bear lies dreaming
Beneath a frozen limb
And silver birch march pliant in the van
Of taller warriors
Flouting the bitter arrows of the storm
With armour wrought in fretted ice
Emblazoned deep with artifice.

II

Here Beauty tryst with Vishnu kept
And then enchanted dreamless slept
While winter girt a fortress sure
That none may yet her sanctuary find
Or know her chill allure
Save but the wind.

SISTER OF WORDSWORTH

BRYAN BEVAN

Dorothy Wordsworth died a century ago, on the twenty-fifth of January this year. She had long outlived herself. It is with relief that we turn from the tired, ailing woman of eighty-four, and imagine her in her heyday with her passionate love of nature, her genius for friendship, her delight in birds and flowers and, above all, as the ever-constant and devoted companion of her brother William.

Dorothy was only a year younger than William and by temperament they were somewhat similar. Both were affectionate, hyper-sensitive and excitable. Even if she lacked William's intellectual gifts, she shared all his passionate intensity of feeling. She had too the same vibrant, artistic sensibility, and responded more quickly to the sights and sounds around her. When they were on walking tours in the Lake District, Scotland or the Continent, she was the more spontaneous, quick to seize on some odd remark or repartee which would interest William.

To understand her it is necessary to realize that she lived entirely for him. From the first she was conscious of her mission in life, to help him with her sympathy and companionship to be true to his vocation as a poet. As she herself wrote to her friend, Lady Beaumont: 'Love for my brother was the building-up of my being, the light of my path.' William also fully realized the debt he owed to Dorothy. He pays tribute to her in many of his poems. He wrote to Charles Lamb in 1833: 'In tenderness of heart I do not honestly believe she was ever exceeded by any of God's creatures. In loving kindness she has no bounds.' And according to Professor de Selincourt, she was the deepest and most permanent influence in William's life. A vivid personal description of her was given by Thomas de Quincey, author of *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*. 'Her face was of Egyptian brown,' he wrote, 'rarely in a woman of English birth had I seen a more determined gipsy tan. Her eyes were not soft, as Mrs. Wordsworth's (the poet's wife), nor were they fierce and bold; but they were wild and startling and hurried in their motion. Her manner was warm and even ardent; her sensibility seemed constitutionally deep.' But he had no high opinion of her knowledge of literature. What impressed her friends was her transparent sincerity. When de Quincey called her the 'very wildest person I have ever known,' he used 'wildest' in its sense as the most 'natural' person he had known – a veritable child of nature.

Dorothy's capacity for appreciating sublime joys and experiencing the keenest sorrows were very highly developed. In her *Journal* she modestly referred to herself as only half a poet, but she was often a

poet in prose. She saw things with the eyes of the spirit and her mystical sense was always powerful. In describing 'our favourite birch tree', she wrote:

> It was yielding to the gusty wind with all its tender twigs. The sun shone upon it, and it glanced in the wind like a flying sunshiny shower. It was a tree in shape with stem and branches, but it was like a spirit of water.

We can imagine some of her wise, almost child-like sentiments being uttered by a Tchekov character in *The Cherry Orchard*. We find in her *Journal*:

> O, thought I. What a beautiful thing God hath made winter to be, by stripping the trees, and letting us see their shapes and forms. What a freedom does it seem to give to the storms.

Many of William's best known poems have their counterpart in the exquisite descriptive writings of his sister. Her word-pictures of the daffodils in the woods beyond Gowbarrow Park seem to give us greater enlightenment about Wordsworth's poem, 'I wandered lonely as a cloud.' And when we read a description of Westminster Bridge and St. Paul's at dawn in Dorothy's *Journal*, it enhances our appreciation of her brother's sonnet, 'Earth has not anything to show more fair.' Their life shared together, indeed, was the inspiration of many of his poems, and there are indications that she continually sacrificed herself for him. It was no easy task to live with an exacting genius. Temperamentally over-anxious, she worried incessantly about his health when it would have been more prudent to look after her own.

We owe to her much information how William came to write his poems, some of them in the orchard of Dove Cottage at Grasmere. On one occasion 'We carried cloaks into the orchard and sat awhile there. I left him, and he nearly finished the poem. I was tired to death and went to bed before him. He came down to me and read the poem to me in bed.' And on another occasion, 'William wished to break off composition, but was unable, and so did himself harm.'

Literary scandal-mongers of our debunking age, in which an evil interpretation on human conduct seems to be preferred, have hinted darkly at the relationship between Dorothy and William. The truth is simple: there was a wonderful affinity of spirit between the two – as rare as it is beautiful. It is evident that Dorothy encouraged William to marry Mary Hutchinson. It would be surprising if Dorothy was not somewhat agitated on the wedding day, though her description of the event is very matter of fact. If in reality the brother's and sister's relations were complicated by guilty feelings, it is hardly conceivable that Dorothy would have made her home with William and Mary after their marriage. But the marriage was wonderfully happy and

all three lived in complete harmony together for many years. Later, Dorothy became a devoted aunt to their children.

All the same, it is doubtful whether she could ever have enjoyed normal married life. Her passion for William was so intense that it prevented her from feeling for any other man an emotion which could have satisfied the physical as well as the spiritual side of her nature. That was her tragedy. But it is obvious from the *Journal* that she loved their friend Coleridge devotedly, and there are passages illustrating her almost maternal solicitude for him. When he left them to go to London and his health worsened, Dorothy's heart went out to him. She wrote:

> Every sight and every sound reminded me of him – dear, dear fellow, of his many walks to us by day and night, of all dear things, I was melancholy and could not talk, but at last eased my heart by weeping – nervous blubbering, says William. It is not so. O! how many reasons have I to be anxious for him.

But William's brusqueness hid his own distress of mind about Coleridge. How tragic for them both to realize that Coleridge's will, never strong, and sapped by an unhappy marriage, was being weakened by over-indulgence in alcohol and narcotics. The gay and charming companion whom they so much loved and admired became a prey to brooding suspicions and jealousies, so that he withdrew himself beyond their love and compassion. Dorothy was powerless to help him, for William always held first place in her heart.

JONAH

RANDLE MANWARING

In the unresting, watery waste,
  Abandoned by his foes,
Wave after wave passed over him
  And the dark tide rose.

There he trod untravelled ways
  Of green mystery;
Weeds entwined the prisoner,
  Locked within the sea.

Laid to rest in the restless deep,
  Alive, in the straits of death,
Monstrous jaws around him closed,
  Who breathed another's breath.

DRYAD'S REBUKE

WILFRID THORLEY

Are things uncouth?
There shall be loveliness if you be kind.
Fear draws a veil o'er beauty,
Death's own shadow.

Fear not your kin;
For, if all men be watchers, who shall toil?
Chill hearts among the sowers,
Chill earth's bosom.

O! soft and brave
Are men who earn our favour, maiming nought.
Mindful are they and cherish
Newt and fledgling;

And when these pass,
Or a frayed squirrel scampers up the bole,
Clap not their hands nor gather
Mirth from terror.

Who snare or slay
Snare their own spirit, clip the wings of joy;
Nor shall the earth for slayers
Yield her plenty.

All things that live
Share of their loveliness with them that love;
Our breath shall shape their nostrils,
Fan their pulses.

FOR AN ENGAGEMENT

J. J. CURLE

Now time takes flight;
Wings in the limpid air
Glide feather-light.
The turning earth lies still,
The skies slide past
And the heart flies
With no least tether

Above all cries
Of wind and weather
In time not ours
Where no dream dies.

Ride there unharmed;
Joy lies in blessing
Not possessing;
Ride there content,
Letting the breeze
With grass and trees
Shape and invent
– Where man's intention fails –
Perfected power to please,
Since no delight avails
Shaped solely by intent.

SARDONIC VIGIL

FRANCES BAVIN

Implacably the yew trees wait
And watch the unquiet sleepers lie
As if their poor tormented dust
Were blown by passions long gone by.

Beneath a monumental dove
Lie Farmer Acre's sanguine bones,
While Janet, 'Relict of Above,'
Speechless at last among the stones,
Hunches a petulant mossy shoulder
Against his overtures of love;
In death her blood runs scarcely colder.

Here lies poor Tom, uncouth and gangling,
In slip-shod clay; his winding sheet
Of shrunken moss, with ivy tangling
Skimpily wraps his awkward feet.
Beside him Alderman Hugely mellows
In neat grey flint, with garlands dangling,
And quite a cut above his fellows.

Sardonically an eldritch moon
Watches the sleepers as they lie,
And restless shadows sift the dust
Of moods and passions long gone by.

The Smiling Muse . . .

NEW SCHOOL

KATHLEEN V. RICHARDSON

Correspondents in the Daily Press have claimed that poetry is becoming popular since modern writers have forsaken obscurity. At a recent Poetry Society Luncheon, Mr. Robert Morley advised poets to write for the man-in-the-street, etc., etc.

The foolish who scoffed at Our Poets
Or begged them to try and be Clear,
By the new school of bards
With these selfsame petards
Have been hoisted – and we too, we fear.

Since finding it's smart to be simple;
Distinguished indeed, to be plain;
Young Apollos en masse
Have achieved a volte face
To naivety next door to inane.

And we, who were happy with Eliot,
Must tackle a new Spoken Word
(As a sign of the times
'Trend in Nursery Rhymes'
Starts a series this week on the Third).

We can see awkward moments may threaten
A keep-abreast family who
Conscientiously listen;
The tots' eyes will glisten
While we simply haven't a clue –

A PROPER TWISTER

P. E. DUNN

I met the Devil once, in a vision:
He bowed before my sceptical derision.
'Dear friend, I am not come to bargain,
But to deny, in scientific jargon
Without resistance
My own existence.
I'm but the psychological projection
Of your own guilty imperfection.'
I nodded, he vanished,
Forever banished.
I find no adequate reason to doubt him,
Yet somehow I feel lost without him!

POETRY AND CRITICISM

ALBERT RALPH KORN

Karl Shapiro, editor of *Poetry*, a magazine of verse published in Chicago, has written a book, *Beyond Criticism*, which includes three essays, 'What The Poet Knows', 'The True Artificer', and 'The Career of the Poem'.

I am at variance with much that the book contains. The title 'Beyond Criticism' is in itself a misnomer and false in its conception. Anything created by human effort is open to criticism, and the poet cannot expect his work to be beyond or above criticism.

In the introduction Mr. Shapiro asks: 'By whom is the poet told how to see the world? By critics, by æstheticians, by theologians, by historians, and by poets themselves, by professionals, in short, by all writers who regard literature as a means and not an end.' Literature should be both a means and an end. Without a means, it is like a ship without a rudder, without an end it has no port of destination. That is the great dilemma of much that is termed experimental poetry. It lacks an intelligible motive and its end is a quagmire of incomprehensible entanglement of meaningless sentences.

In the essay 'What the Poet Knows' the author writes: 'I prefer to think of art as a kind of knowledge which is neither better nor worse than other kinds and which cannot be compared with them at all.' But that kind of art would be an impossibility, it would be non-existent. Poetry can be compared to music, painting to sculpture . . .

Then in the essay, 'The True Artificer', we read: 'The reasoning mind cannot imagine how serious utterances can really be serious unless they are put directly, that is, in prose.' To this statement I am in complete opposition. Poetry can be direct, serious, and clear. For example, 'An Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' by Thomas Gray and considered one of the finest poems in the English language, fulfils all the enumerated qualifications, being direct, serious and clear.

Again: 'Good poets never play with meaning; on the contrary they make meaning foolproof. There is no such thing as a good unintelligible work of art. And there is no such thing as a good work of art which is not immediately apprehensible in the senses.' Bravo, Karl Shapiro, I agree one hundred per cent! But if this is your belief, why has so great an amount of unintelligible poetry appeared in *Poetry*?

Once more in this essay the author writes: 'The discovery that poetry must be written has unfortunately helped those zealous people who believe in something called communication.' Why unfortunate? If a poem does not communicate it will lack an appreciative audience and become a nonentity. If a poet does not write for an audience, what does he write for – a vacuum?

In 'The Career of the Poem', referring to the rivalry between the historic poet and what the author calls mythic poet, Mr. Shapiro says, 'Perceiving this strife, the readers of poems, if there are any left, decide it is a fight between pessimism and optimism, intellectuals and emotionalists, romantics and classicists, or some other misleading dualism.' The author is unduly pessimistic; there is a considerable amount of good intelligible poetry being published to-day and some of it is being paid for by publications with a large circulation.

There is, however, a real strife in progress at present in the world of poetry and it has been going on for some years between those poets who practice clarity, and those poets who practice obscurity or make excuses for it. I have always believed that readers of poetry who favoured clarity greatly outnumbered those who favoured obscurity. A recent survey confirmed this belief in striking fashion. Eighty-five per cent of those interrogated favoured clarity, ten per cent favoured obscurity, and five per cent were undecided.

Continuing: 'Let us give up the old pedagogical idea that the effect of poetry on the world is salutary. To believe that men are bettered by poetry is as narrow as to believe that they are worsened by it.' The contrary is true. The reader is undoubtedly bettered or worsened by the kind of poetry he reads. An individual's life can be bettered by a single poem, even one line can make a major difference in the betterment of a reader's future. Poetry is and can be a vital force for good. It all depends on the kind of poetry it is.

To further his argument the writer mentions the tragic end of Hart Crane. 'In Crane myth meets history, and we witness the inevitable collapse of personality, which is so characteristic of modern poetry.' Crane did not collapse because he pondered on the myth or history in poetry or, as Mr. Shapiro states, was generally regarded as a martyr of modern society, but because he did not possess the moral fibre to resist drunkenness, the surrender to masochism, and in the end to suicide.

Let us turn to a more cheerful picture, and observe from the productive lives of Longfellow, Whittier and Robert Frost and from other poets past and present, on both the American and English horizon, that poetry can and does exercise an ennobling effect on both the poet and his audience. Poets should not be unduly dejected or elated by criticism of their work. Critics are notable for their ability to disagree. A critic who only points out the faults in a poem but neglects to comment on its merits is not a competent critic. Time is the best critic. The gold will survive, the dross disappear. Let poets say with Tennyson 'I do but sing because I must' and with Keats 'The true poet pours out a balm upon the world.'

'DEAR EDITORS – '

(The opinions expressed in the following Letters from Readers are not necessarily those of *The Poetry Review*.)

BALLAD AND EPIC

Mr. Arnold Colville makes a very strange assertion in the January-March number when he writes: 'A ballad is a miniature epic'.

When in 1920 I published a twelve-page ballad entitled *The Second Crucifixion* (changed in 1932 to *Two Foemen*) the sub-title 'A Ballad Epic of the War' was inserted because I felt it contained some features foreign to ballads in general. I am sorry if I helped to mislead, because more often than not there are no prominent epic features in the ballad. The rustic narrative poetry of late-medieval England may have grown out of epic-flavoured poems like 'Beowulf', but for the most part it is more incidental, more homely, breathing a less heroic or majestic atmosphere than the word 'epic' suggests; while as regards 'refrain' this frequent feature of the ballad is absent from the epic proper, as far as I am aware.

As to 'classical' the original Ballad does not fall into the categories of written poetry. The attempt to classicize Sir Philip Sidney's favourite ballad, 'Chevy Chace', completely ruined it, changing the wild into the starchy, the vocal into a broadsheet. Later on Cowper exercised his classical knowledge upon the ballad, and tamed it into 'John Gilpin', a ballad that reeks of sophistication and the study.

Probably the greatest literary ballads ever written were 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' and 'Lenore' (German), but I don't think either Coleridge or Bürger would have been pleased if they had been praised for writing classical ballads, though the second certainly introduces literary regularities that the first tried to avoid.

HERBERT PALMER

THE POET'S DEBT TO HIS PREDECESSORS

Being derivative is, to many modern critics, a grievous fault in traditional policy, and to some also a justification for their own poetical excesses.

A friendly reviewer of my recently published book of verse, *The Gleam and The Dark*, has wondered how much I owe to Longfellow. He finds a similar philosophy in that poet; 'My Lost Youth', and in one particular poem of mine. I have, quite candidly, never read nor even opened my Longfellow for some time now, though the refrain, 'A boy's will is the wind's will, and the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts', is known to me, of course, as a detached couplet.

Yet one actual phrase, 'the song and the silence', occurs in both poems. This, surely, is not just a case of something deep-buried coming up again, but the subconscious. A general community of thought *might* well produce an individual community of phrase, and over the centuries, the same phrase, in prose or verse, can, obviously, be more than once repeated.

As a rule, it requires a third party to discover 'affinities' in the work of a creative artist, of which he himself may be totally unaware. And often enough, such 'discoveries' prove to be in the nature of wishful thinking.

ALEXANDER BUIST

OUR LIBRARY AT PORTMAN SQUARE

It is a curious symptom of the present position of poetry that if one happens to be interested in some poet who is not an established 'classic' it is extraordinarily hard to get hold of his work. For example, I have been trying to obtain copies of Hugh MacDiarmid's volumes of poetry; and he is generally regarded as being the founder and leader of the renaissance in Scottish poetry. His books are virtually unobtainable in the London bookshops; yet one hears poets and publishers lamenting that poetry will not sell.

It seems to be a kind of vicious circle. Only small editions are printed, and the public give up trying to buy poetry as they expect it to be out of print. In this connection I should like to say how immensely important the Library of The Poetry Society is. Where I think it is of especial value is in the large number of volumes of poetry by the lesser-known poets which it contains. I have been able to hunt out and borrow many interesting volumes of verse which it would have been almost hopeless to have tried to obtain through the public library system.

Judgments change: for instance, John Donne was not regarded as a great poet much before the end of the nineteenth century. Doubtless some relatively minor poets of the present day will be reassessed in the future. The Poetry Society Library enables members to study these more obscure volumes in pleasant conditions.

Finally, I should like to take this opportunity to thank the Librarian and the staff of the Society for the chance thus given me to pursue my work and interests. I am surprised to see how little the library is used by members considering its unique stock of books and its amenities for study.

JOHN R. LLOYD

ASSONANCE AS A RHYME-SUBSTITUTE

In his review of James Kirkup's poetry, Geoffrey Johnson advises that poet to turn a blind eye to 'certain barbarous stylistic tricks and assumptions momentarily in fashion'. Under this heading he includes 'assonance as a rhyme-substitute' which, he says, 'is a device already staled by thousands of poetic pretenders'. But surely the fact that thousands of people use a stylistic device (I would not call it a trick, for that is too question-begging a word) is no reflection on the device itself. No doubt thousands of poetic pretenders use full rhymes, or no rhymes at all, but would Mr. Johnson advise the poet to turn a blind eye in those directions also? Surely it is an unsound argument to say that because many people misuse a device therefore it must not be used at all?

Mr. Johnson classifies this form of assonance as *barbarous*. One must presume that he has no objection to assonance within a poem providing it does not occur at the end of a line. Would Mr. Johnson please explain to one puzzled reader what there is about 'assonance as a rhyme-substitute' that merits such a strong epithet of denunciation? It seems to me that F. Pratt Green, for example, uses this device to produce most delightful and civilized poetry. It was also used to a very great extent by W. B. Yeats in such poems as

'Byzantium', 'Easter 1916', 'News for the Delphic Oracle', and many others. And would Mr. Johnson regard as barbarous the last section of 'Under Ben Bulben?'

Under bare Ben Bulben's head
In Drumcliff churchyard Yeats is laid.
An ancestor was rector there
Long years ago, a church stands near,
By the road an ancient cross.
No marble, no conventional phrase;
On limestone quarried near the spot
By his command these words are cut:
Cast a cold eye
On life, on death.
Horseman, pass by!

P. E. DUNN

GEOFFREY JOHNSON replies: A wide question and well put. Briefly, my dislike of overworked assonance-substitution is quite personal, but, I hope, honest. To me rhyme is satisfying. Though an artifice, it occurs naturally to poets as notes punctuating their rhythms, etc. Laboriously contrived assonances or sustained off-notes are, to me, (1) ugly, as distorted vowels or wilful discords are ugly, (2) affected, that is, far more artificial than the rhymes they displace, (3) they disappoint the ear, that waits for 'rhymes' and is fobbed off with 'reams'; repeated, the shock quickly loses its effect and is more monotonously irritating than the most hackneyed rhymes, (4) Wilfrid Owen, who introduced the device from Welsh, was a genuine explorer. His use of it is artistically justifiable because it conveys his own inner discord between love of his fellow men and his having to help in slaughtering them – i.e., there was a real inner compulsion. His mechanical copyists have none; their chief desire seems to be to cash-in on a fleeting fashion at all costs. (Cf. the countless imitators of Hopkins a decade or so back). (5) The later Yeats, an over-selfconscious poet if ever there was one, just proves my point. Take away the tortured ingenuity of head-laid . . . spot-cut, etc., and what is left but prosaic and egotistic statement? That is, much more stress to-day is being put on superficial mannerisms and tricks of style than on what matters, poetic substance.

GEOFFREY JOHNSON

TRIBUTE

Give up the Poetry Society? How could I! The very first verse (I dare not say poem) ever submitted by me anywhere was accepted by Mr. Galloway Kyle (O Sweet, Sweet Scrawl!) and printed in *The Poetry Review*. Thereafter several of my little verses offered . . .

*

I have strayed upon the lowermost paths of Parnassus,
And having so lonely strayed,
Must ever shield a flickering torch,
Stumbling from steep to little steep . . .

C. H. HARDING

LAUREATE POETS

STEPHEN GRAHAM

The Poets Laureate, by Kenneth Hopkins (The Bodley Head, 18s.)

This book has its place on the library shelf for the student of poetry, being valuable as a work of reference and at the same time pleasantly written. It takes you from Ben Jonson to Masefield through a series of names and careers many of which will be unknown or obscure to the majority of readers. It points to what official England and the Court thought of poetry in various eras, and illustrates how great poets and others wrote to a theme upon occasion rather than follow the unbidden inspiration.

James the First awarded Ben Jonson a pension of a hundred pounds a year and a butt of Canary wine yearly from the King's cellar. Ben got the wine but had to dun Majesty for the money, which was the case with several of his successors. Ben Jonson was not called laureate. When Jonson died the pension was given to Davenant; he was not an outstanding poet, but he managed to live through the Puritan revolution. Kenneth Hopkins does not say whether Cromwell continued the pension, but presumably Charles the Second did. Davenant died in 1668 and then John Dryden was officially named Poet Laureate.

Strictly speaking, Dryden was the first of the laureates. He understood his task as writing for the King and defending him in controversy. As he was a great satiric genius he did this admirably and incidentally produced some very fine verse. He created an office or function for the Poet Laureate, to serve the throne. This was unfortunate and resulted, the next century, in a great deal of the 'Hail Glorious George!' stuff.

William of Orange did not like Dryden, so he turned him out and appointed Shadwell whom the first laureate immortalized in the lines:

> The rest to some faint meaning make pretence
> But Shadwell never deviates into sense.

But that did not matter to William the Third. In Shadwell's first laudation he called him 'the great Orange'; that was enough. But William went lower and his next choice was a man whom the author of this book, Mr. Hopkins, describes as 'surviving in footnotes'. His name was Nahum Tate and he wrote to the Queen:

> Maria, O appear! appear!
> Thy softest Charms Display.

Next we have the poetaster Nicholas Rowe who lasted till the accession of George the First.

> Majesty and great renown
> Wait thy beamy brow to crown.

'Beamy brow' is good. After Rowe there was Eusden, who appealed to heaven to increase the royal progeny 'every circling year' and asked it to:

> Shield BRUNSWIC and his godlike line.
> This we for blessings on BRITANNIA pray
> Britannia! ever blest if THEY.

That sounds like Alice in Wonderland ... We proceed to Colley Cibber, better known but not much better poet. Kenneth Hopkins cites a royal birthday ode, 1731, and remarks 'What it means, if indeed meaning lurks within it, I have not learned.' It contains this verse:

With song, ye Britons lead the day!
Sing, sing the morn that gave him breath,
Whose virtues never shall decay,
No, never never taste of death.

It will be seen that the post of Poet Laureate is in a way a continuation of that of court jester. There are others on the way to Southey and Wordsworth whom we have not space to name. Southey did something to remedy the situation, having at least a claim to be an authentic poet. The aged Wordsworth did more, but one can well understand the scathing censure he incurred. The poet laureateship was in disrepute. But Wordsworth accepted it as a national recognition of poetry, not as an opportunity for sycophancy. He was laureate only for the last seven years of his life and did not write very much in that time. He did not need to: he had written all his great poems and brought a glory to the throne and into the national life of England.

But it was Tennyson who established the idea of a Poet Laureate as one who must first of all be the greatest poet of his time and only secondarily ready to write leading articles in verse and hymns to the royal house. It is true he descended to write in a popular vein as in 'The Charge of the Light Brigade', but even this had a quality not to be discerned in the effusions of the official bards during the eighteenth century. Queen Victoria could appreciate Tennyson and was moved by his poetry; that was a change, as most of her predecessors had no ear.

By the time Tennyson died the Queen had become somnolent, and she left it to Lord Salisbury to choose a successor. He was in a quandary. He could not ask the greatest living poet, since Swinburne was a bit of an anarchist.

Me, do you ask to sing
Parochial pomps and waste
The wail of jubileedom?

So we had the mediocrity Alfred Austen, and then Robert Bridges who was a fine poet but not a national voice. Somehow Kipling was missed out. There was a time when he spoke for England, though it passed with the Boer War. He could have been a fine laureate. We came to John Masefield, a good choice if belated. One cannot fit laureates into their right time. Perhaps they ought to change with an administration. Dr. Masefield is the poet of the great Liberal era 1906–14, and Asquith's cabinet raved about him. He was their poet but he has had to carry the banner in a different procession.

*

Window in the West, by Gilbert Thomas (Epworth Press, 9s. 6d.).
Here is an excellent bedside book. These essays, reflective, urbane, gracious, conversational in tone, often personal but never egotistical, will keep the reader awake until someone, or his own conscience, tells him to turn out the light. The first essay, on Thomas Hardy, correcting the view that the great poet-novelist was a pessimist of pessimists, and that on Emily Dickinson, will be particularly enjoyed. F. G. P.

HERE'S A HOW D'YE DO!

F. PRATT GREEN

New Poems, 1954, A P.E.N. Anthology, edited by Rex Warner, Christopher Hassall, and Laurie Lee (Michael Joseph, 10s. 6d.)

I doubt the Editor-in-Chief's wisdom in giving me this assignment. Perhaps he thinks a contributor's views on a much-chastised anthology would be interesting. I hope he is right!

The series known as *New Poems*, of which three volumes have now appeared, was launched because Sir Desmond MacCarthy, addressing members of P.E.N., expressed a hope that some way would be found of helping new poets to gain the ear of the public. It was odd, therefore, that the 1952 and 1953 volumes, though splendidly representative of the poetic impulse of our time, bristled with famous names and gave scant space to new poets. The editors of the 1954 volume decided to take their own line. With 10,000 poems on their hands, what else could they do?

They began the Herculean task by inviting twenty poets, presumably of established reputation, to submit work (guessing the twenty is a nice parlour game), and selected one poem by each. Then they sat down to digest the ten thousand, having agreed among themselves not to be influenced by age, eminence, or school, with the aim of discovering the eighty poems they liked best. Pity those editors, dear reader!

The result of their labours was curious. With the old guard virtually and honourably dismissed, with the avant-garde virtually and somewhat ignominiously left out, there was room for a considerable number of unknown poets to emerge, some of whom had never had a poem published before, and most of whom were probably surprised to find themselves in the anthology of the year.

This rashness was too much for the critics. Several had seizures in the sedate columns of respectable newspapers and periodicals. One or two obviously expected these wretched editors, after reading the reviews, to commit suicide. But the sky lightened when *The Listener* adopted a kindlier tone: 'Here is the sign again of romantic fervour and lyrical gesture, with a return to traditional forms and an effort to be simple and direct. This is a welcome turn of the tide, for it may bring poetry once again lapping at the feet of the general public.' The editors were reprieved!

My own impression is that here is poetry which communicates, though I regret the absence of some of the vigorous, witty young poets who are now enlivening the smaller poetry magazines. When so many poems are good, I hesitate to name the four which gave me the greatest pleasure: Edwin Muir's 'Telemachos Remembers', for its grave beauty of thought and phrase; Charles Higham's lyrical and mysterious 'A Metamorphosis'; G. C. Warnock's descriptive 'Night in Autumn', his first published poem; and a short, stabbing poem by Stevie Smith, of nightmare intensity, called 'Not Waving but Drowning'. Another score cry out for mention, some by poets well-known to readers of *The Poetry Review*.

But the value of the book resides not so much in the individual contribution as in its collective quality, so remarkable that one might have guessed that

the editors had agreed what makes a poem come alive. This reminds me to add that the introduction, which enraged some of the critics, is refreshingly frank and – a fig for the critics! – sensible.

TREBLE CHANCE

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

The First Morning, by Peter Viereck (Scribners, 18s.)
The Dreamer And The Sheaves, by I. R. Orton (Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, 8s. 6d.)
The Wounded Bird, by Mary Winter Were (Courier Publishing Co., 7s. 6d.)

When the dust-jacket informs us that Santayana has called the thirty-eight-years-old American poet, Peter Viereck, 'a great man', and that Robert Frost regards him as 'the present hope of poetry', then an English critic must take notice. Ponder as I may, however, I cannot detect that major note in these poems, although I find much to commend; a vast delight in living, a rich, controlled, exuberance of language, and a quick humour. But Mr. Viereck is so like a traveller who has surveyed yet not penetrated, one who has no clear notion of his destination and so in love with the adventure that he barely heeds the anxieties of other travellers, or those of the natives. Yet he is a traveller with a gift of swift comparison and implication:

> And 'Release, release,' rustled the quarries,
> One touch will free the serenity locked in our stones.

Also he has a pretty turn of wit that deflates:

> Poems are made by trees like me
> But only God can make a fool –

and a fugitive mission that holds a promise and a challenge:

> When a new sacrament is invented, eighth on eighth,
> Its name will be Regret That Undoes, an agent, marvellous, a magic:
> To salvage foundered sincerities from reefs of desolate embracing,
> To get, to get back by praising, by praising.

In complete contrast is the quiet yet perceptive voice of Iris Orton, whose first book crowns her apprenticeship in the periodicals. She is no ranging adventurer, but the thoughtful interpreter of familiar sights and occasions. 'Bonfire Night', 'The 'Cello', 'The Library', 'The Ruins', 'Birth and Death' – these are some of the titles illustrating her concern. She is like a friend at one's elbow, observing and expressing in a modern idiom her emotional responses with a restrained authority:

> And because we each have voices
> There is no exit door that locks behind us
> And no room we enter that will ever lose us.

Mary Winter Were has the certainty of an assured faith. Her Christian beliefs and her craftsmanship in traditional forms and diction give to her poems a mature serenity:

> Love lit the path the pilgrims went.
> I turned to follow them – content –
> Since Love is ever a following.

MANY PAINTERS, ONE BIRD

KATHLEEN VALMAI RICHARDSON

The Russian Sister and other Poems, by G. Rostrevor Hamilton (Heinemann, 12s. 6d.)

The Nine Songs. A Study of Shamanism in Ancient China, by Arthur Waley (Allen & Unwin, 10s.)

The Courtly Season, by Richard Easton, and *In the Beginning,* by Paul Casimir (Zebra Poets, each 1s.)

Sonnets in Two Keys, by G. S. Oddy (Mitre Press, 5s.)

Sir George Rostrevor Hamilton's new collection shows many facets of a highly skilled and firmly controlled muse. Here are no fancy fallals, despite the minuteness of observation and exactness of description which point his story-poems, of which the title piece is a good example. Where many a younger poet might have run amok among image-words, Sir George paints the picture with traditional tools and materials, fastidiously selected. Indeed, much of his work is akin to painting: sometimes a portrait, sometimes a domestic interior, or a mountain scene, or a remembrance of childhood or even a jolly little home-movie like 'The Village Wedding'. His birthday piece for Walter de la Mare, 'Questions and Answers', shows the affinity between the two men's work. Though Rostrevor Hamilton does not spin the glamour (what a pity that word has been so soiled) of his 'Prince of Dreams', the fundamental vision is there. In the section devoted to light verse, the dry humour is never flippant and one feels the underlying compassion for poor Jones of Ealing and the lady with the disappointing Bert. Altogether, as might be expected, this volume is the product of a mature philosophy.

Coming to Arthur Waley's *The Nine Songs* with the trepidation of complete ignorance – Shamanism sounds so esoteric – I was fascinated at once by the lucid prose of the introductory essay. Mr. Waley's well-known felicity in translation of Chinese thought extends a cool hand over everything in this delightful book. One's only regret is that no practicable means exist for transferring dance-forms to the printed page. Illustrations? Perhaps, if the authentic kind exist or could be conceived in modern idiom to depict the ritual dances which formed an integral part of the Shaman's ecstasy. These *Songs* can be interestingly compared to those of St. John of the Cross, not because of any obvious likeness but for the surprising contrast between the naive voluptuousness of the European Christian and the chaste restraint of the Third Century, B.C. Shaman.

Two Zebra poets offer modest booklets: Richard Easton, a collection of sonnets, and Paul Casimir, fourteen first poems. It seems strange that the sonnet-form should have been chosen by one who is content to leave so many rough patches in the scansion. True, these are love poems of a youthful urgency – but so were Shakespeare's, who never allowed his emotions to clog eye or ear. Paul Casimir gives a hint of his own poetical progression in his dedication, a progress which is leading him from the inevitable derivations – poetry must be built on something – to a voice of his own and a fluent

technique. 'Guinevere' is a fine little poem which needs no 'notes'.

Another book of sonnets comes from G. S. Oddy. 'Major' and 'minor' are dangerous words for poets, although the musical montage is not inappropriate to these well-made verses which sometimes, as in 'The Birth of Desire' and 'Coda', arrive at an impressive cadence. Incidentally, that pitfall-word 'exquisite' ill fits the iambic, a fact more familiar to Mr. Oddy than to Mr. Easton.

CHOIR AND SOLO

GEOFFREY JOHNSON

Canadian Poetry in English, chosen by Bliss Carman, Lorne Pierce and V. B. Rhodenizer (Ryerson Press, Toronto, six dollars)

Borestone Mountain Poetry Awards 1954 (Stanford Univ. Press, California, three dollars)

The Stunted Strong, by Fred Cogswell (Fiddlehead Poetry Books, Univ. of New Brunswick, Canada, fifty cents or 2s. 6d.)

The first of these books, a truly impressive harvest, is a completion and extension of the representative anthology planned by the poet Bliss Carman. His literary executor, Dr. Pierce, skilfully helped by Professor Rhodenizer, has selected and added with a sanity and independence of judgment rare in these days. For a country so young the temporal range is naturally short – from the first eighteenth-century contacts with the Red Indian to poems written after the second World War – but what riches and variety of riches in its 450 pages!

Those who wish to discover or to renew acquaintance with the older Canadian poets of repute will find them all generously represented here – Charles G. D. Roberts, Archibald Lampman, Bliss Carman, Duncan Campbell Scott, George Herbert Clarke, Arthur Stringer, Robert Service and Marjorie Pickthall. For those eager to taste the best of the good but newer wine there are sparkling specimens of its various vintages by Arthur S. Bourinot, Audrey Alexandra Brown, Lionel Stevenson, Charles Bruce and Alfred W. Purdy. But always the reader will find poetry of authentic flavour.

The second book in the list is a compilation of original poetry published in magazines of the English-speaking world during 1953, and is the sixth in a distinguished, carefully-edited and impeccably-produced series. The final selections, as before, were made by five different editors (all poets themselves) who employed greatly differing criteria for their choices, thus securing independence from any school or cult. Hildegarde Flanner, Frances Minturn Howard, Gertrude Claytor and Lionel Stevenson (chairman) served as advisory editors, and Robert Thomas Moore as editor-in-chief. Among the English writers included are Dannie Abse, Geoffrey Johnson and Laurie Lee (third prize, a hundred dollars).

Fred Cogswell, editor of the lively New Brunswick poetry magazine, *The Fiddlehead,* opens the series listed above with a brochure of sixteen vigorous sonnets. These are concerned mainly with the terse and realistic delineation of New Brunswick types. He has a keen eye for character and a decided gift for its compact expression.

REMEMBERED VOICES

JOHN GRADDON

Sonnets and Verses, by H. Belloc (Duckworth, 12s. 6d.)

Verse Letters to Five Friends, by E. H. W. Meyerstein (Heinemann, 5s.)

Taliessin through Logres and *The Region of the Summer Stars*, by Charles Williams (Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, 12s. 6d.)

These remain, with other memories . . .

First the Classic. The introductory note by Reginald Jebb catches a breathless glimpse of the tornado of activity that was Hilaire Belloc – always rather more than a man, physically and mentally, and guided, unerringly, by his Faith and his heart. Sonnets and ballades, verses and epigrams – they will not divide naturally into form – fall rather into emotions, contempt, scorn, anger lashing at person, cause and effect and then beauty, a tender loveliness captured immortally within the net of a few words.

Next the Dilettante. Only by comparison, though, only by the spread of his erudition over so many fields in verse and prose and talk.

'Words were his love, a verbal grace his aim.'

These verse letters are impersonal reflections of a wise and quiet mind.

Lastly the Mystic. Charles Williams died in the summer of 1945 at the age of fifty-nine. He had an intense awareness of the intermingling of another world with this – or rather of the human spirit ranging through and beyond the material confines of life. In fiction there is nothing quite like his seven remarkable novels.

His imaginative range was immense, from describing entrancingly a spiritual adventure, to the horrifying and inevitable descent of a human soul into its own private hell. The Arthurian myth and the Grail objective attracted him enormously because of its perennial and eternal relevance to human and Christian experience. These verses have a life of their own only to be yielded to the elect.

WORDS AND THEIR MUSIC

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

Troilus and Cressida. Libretto by Christopher Hassall (Oxford University Press, 3s. 6d.)

Walter de la Mare and The Traveller, by Victoria Sackville-West (Oxford University Press, 3s. 6d.)

Christopher Hassall is recognized as a gifted lyrical poet. Recently his poetic drama, *The Player King*, was acclaimed for its strength and pathos. Now he gains new laurels with this brilliant libretto for William Walton's grand opera.

The story of Cressida, sent by the Trojans to the Greeks in diplomatic exchange, her wavering defection from Troilus to the Greek Diomede, her

final recantation, is not found in Greek drama. It stems in medieval lore, through Boccaccio to Chaucer and Shakespeare. Endowing it with new life and the proportions of classic tragedy, Christopher Hassall has woven his plot round a driven, lost, yet finally staunch, woman; thus avoiding the indefinite climax of Chaucer, and Shakespeare's conception of a wanton. The result is mounting drama matching the exigencies of the music.

The action moves with a finely modulated iambic metre. The lyrics for the lovers and the chorus, the duet 'Kind are the Gods' in Act II, and the final sextet are beyond praise. Here, in the mysterious realm of grand opera, is language and drama capable of standing alone as a work of poetic splendour.

Victoria Sackville-West shows what enjoyment one poet may give another. She deals with Mr. de la Mare's long poem, 'The Traveller,' a desert journey, with a devoted Arab mare, to despair and death, and parallels man's pilgrimage with his attendant soul. But here is also Walter de la Mare's perennial journeying in 'another Realm'; his lantern-glow comfort for our enigma and loneliness. Miss Sackville-West traces affinities with Marvell, Keats and Christina Rossetti – and with Coleridge, whose other traveller, a mariner, prayed also to a mysterious and pitiful god.

A lecture of revelation: Yes, of Walter de la Mare – and – Miss Sackville-West.

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Poems by R. R. Zanker. (Privately printed, 37 Overleigh Road, Chester)

After the decline of the minstrel and the ballad singer, the poet often took his handwritten wares directly to his public. He may have distributed them among his friends or, like W. H. Davies, sold them from door to door. He had faith in their merit and he had to live.

There are indications that it may not be long before the poet has again to adopt this means of gaining a hearing. Indeed, one member of the Society has started by having privately printed a collection of his poems – R. R. Zanker, who is a schoolmaster.

Mr. Zanker holds the view that most of the disregard for poetry is due to uninspired teaching. He points out that we do expect an Art Master to be able to execute a competent drawing or painting, but the same qualification is never expected of an English Master; and indeed, most of them would be alarmed at the suggestion.

As far as I know, this unassuming booklet of verse can only be obtained from the author, and I give you his address above. It would indicate a practical interest in the welfare of poets if, occasionally, the reader sought the poet.

The verses are unassuming also – personal and private, lyrically simple, straightforward and sincere. Here and there is a deeper note:

I do not think that it is odd
To find in contradiction, God.

J.G.

*

FOR AUTHORS ONLY

Members who are Authors, we mean . . . Turn back to Page 70 for something to your advantage.

ACCENT ON SUNSHINE

NOTES BY THE EDITORIAL STAFF

(The inclusion of a new work in these notes does not preclude a subsequent review.)

In criticism, as well as elsewhere, there is nothing new under the sun. Centuries ago there were creative writers' pens dipped in muddy ink, playwrights and poets whose vagueness was deliberate, pretending to profundity without achieving it. Rare Ben Jonson found that this concerned him greatly, and he treated it with scant respect in his prose-writings. He appealed to his contemporaries to 'redeeme Arts to a pure, open, and fluory light.' He complained that 'many writers perplexe their Readers and Hearers with meere *Non-sense*. Their writings need sunshine. Pure and neat language I love, yet plaine and customary. A barbarous Phrase have often made mee out of love with a good sense: and doubtfull writing hath wrackt mee beyond my patience.'

Their writings need sunshine. The whole world needs it, as a matter of fact: and if our emphasis in this rapid review of some thirty books should be on brightness and warmth, ignoring the chill shadow of perplexity, who shall suspect our judgement? The quotations from Jonson, incidentally, may be found in a most valuable new survey by Robert Lathrop Sharp of the revolt against metaphysical poetry which occupied a period in literary history which is indicated in the title of Professor Sharp's book: *From Donne to Dryden* (North Carolina University Press: London, Geoffrey Cumberlege, 24s.). In another new work that has come to us from America there are some verses 'To a Young Man visiting England for the first time', providing these notes with a fittingly sunny send-off. All the same, *First Snow*, by Edward S'eese (Fine Editions Press, New York, 3.50 dollars) is a collection of thoughtful, easy poems that are not without their poignant moments. What is it in the year's first snowfall 'that he, remembering, should clutch his heart as if his heart might break?' *Escape to Childhood,* by Katherine M. Garner (Lincoln: Advance Publicity Service, 6s.) follows naturally. It is charming, especially in the lyric which recalls how the author, once upon a time, listened at her parent's knee to his reading out of the 'Peep of Day' and 'Chatterbox'.

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The happiest way of commending *The Poems of David Raikes* (Fantasy Press, 8s. 6d.) is to quote from the introduction by Charles Wrinch, of his old college. David Raikes was killed in the Second World War at the age of twenty, and doubtless when he grew homesick out on the Italian front he thought longingly of the mountains of Wales about which he had written in the verse which he left at his death. 'The Rose,' he wrote, 'is lovely, and has a perfect scent; but the rose withers. Sunsets, and morning mists, are beautiful, but for a moment. The mountains are beautiful, and they are always there. And that is the reason why I came back to the mountains.' David Raikes's poems are the consequence of this appreciative mood, and it is good that they have been printed. An appreciation of life characterizes the verses of several other authors in our list: *One More Cairn,* by John C. Lyth, by profession a doctor – with a welcome face – (Catherall and Co., Hexham, 9s. 6d.); *Miracle at Midnight,* a play with Carols by Tom Fleming, acted at the Gateway Theatre, Edinburgh 'to the Glory of Almighty God' (Epworth Press, 6s.); *Beyond*

POETRY SOCIETY SPECIAL

THE ANNUAL LUNCHEON FOR ALL MEMBERS AND THEIR FRIENDS

will be held at The English-Speaking Union, Dartmouth House, 37 Charles Street, Berkeley Square, London, W.1.

SATURDAY, 7TH MAY, 1955,

at 12.35 for 1.15. This is a Get-Together Luncheon, and applications for Tickets, 15s. each (exclusive of wines), should be made early, as the accommodation is limited.

Accompanied by a remittance, the applications must be addressed to Mrs. T. L. Adamson, The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1. Cheques must be made payable to The Poetry Society.

In accordance with the Licensing Regulations the names and addresses of those who wish to attend, and of their guests also, must accompany their application, which can be made from 1st April onward.

Distinguished Visitors will be present, and the President and the General Council are the official hosts and hostesses.

REMEMBER THE DATE – SATURDAY 7TH MAY – AND EVERYBODY IS WELCOME.

these Voices, by T. M. Auld (Foulis, 12s. 6d. and 7s. 6d.) – dedicated to the unknown reader 'to whose heart my heart may speak' – and *Nor Bitter Nor Profane*, by Stella Weston Tuttle (Kaleidograph Press, Texas, 2 dollars). 'And blessed are these, the well content, the unbewildered and reverent' – this couplet may be taken as the keynote. And in the case of *My Old Rocking Chair and other Poems* (Stockwell, 3s. 6d.), so may the title. Again a title, this time *Whipping Hearts Like Gigs* (Fortune Press, 6s.), means something. It is not readily understandable by twentieth-century readers, and neither are the verses with which Mary Vivian Kernick associates it. The phrase is borrowed from Richard Lovelace's *Love Inthroned*, and the author's prolificity and smooth flow suggest that they have made her too ambitious.

John O'Brien, if we are to judge by his collection *The Parish of St. Mel's and other verses* (Angus and Robertson, 7s. 6d.), is a merry soul. Many a concert at Village Institutes, or their equivalent, must have been a rollicking affair through his yarns in rhyme. *Fourteen Men*, by Mary Gilmore, from the same publishers (15s.), is different in the extreme. Dame Gilmore has been described in her own country, Australia, as 'one of those rare personalities who become legendary figures in their own lifetime', and these lyrics and 'ballads' are the outcome of her work as a pioneer 'down under'. Her humanism is most effectively expressed in very short pieces. For example, 'The Scream', prefaced by a quotation from a private letter: 'There is a plague of fleas. I suppose the cry of a flea is just as clear to God as the cry of a man.' The

verse itself is only five lines and is too obvious to need quoting. Again from Angus and Robertson, of London, as well as Sydney, comes a volume entitled *The Lonely Fire*, by Nan McDonald (15s.). The Australian landscape is more definitely pictured in these quiet, earnest pieces:

> . . . And now, for the northward track, where high
> And sheer through the mist of the thundering foam
> rise the mountains –
> How black in the moonlight! . . .

Each of these three last-named volumes might profitably be read by those whose interest in Australian life is wider than Test cricket.

Welcome to another book of poetry – at last! – from Erica Marx's Hand and Flower Press. Taste and quality are apparent on every page of *Gold*, by Christine Brooke-Rose, and it is the poet's triumph that her attempt to brighten a metal with fifty twelve-line descriptions, evocative and picturesque, has the unique effect she sought. An interesting technical device is the repetition in the first line of several sections – i.e., 'From black to blue and from blue to gold' – and then a change of repetition in another three or four, and so on. Another link with The Poetry Society – Miss Marx's interest in and enthusiasm for it are well known – is to be noted in *Poems*, by John Blanford (Mitre Press, 10s. 6d.). Mr. Blanford's work has appeared in this quarterly, but the most representative examples of his careful, thoughtful, and Nature-loving Muse are to be found in a distinguished collection.

Without the names of John Cowper Powys, Vernon Watkins, Dannie Abse, Huw Menai, A. G. Prys-Jones, and a few more, the autumn number of *The Poetry Book Magazine* would not convey any particularly impressive idea of contemporary 'Poetry from Wales' (P.B.M., 75 cents). We note the earlier names of W. H. Davies, Wilfrid Owen, and Edward Thomas in the introduction, and also that of 'Dylan Thomas, the most gifted English-speaking son Wales has produced for many centuries.' For those who take this too literally may we suggest a corrective – the essay on W. H. Davies in Sir Osbert Sitwell's *Noble Essences*?

*

Seldom can it be honestly declared that a poet's love-poems are the most interesting in a book of which they are only one section. *Mercy Overdue*, by Elizabeth Pinney-Hunt (Les Editions de L'École, Paris) is worthy of praise for the pages 'Concerning Love'. Whispered murmurs might be a fitting description of verses which are as far from the conventional idea of the poetry that comes from France as W. H. Davies is from Wales's 'most gifted English-speaking son for many centuries' – see quotation above. 'Whispered murmur' is the title of one of Miss Pinney-Hunt's love-poems, and others are as charming: 'Let me watch your face', 'Bejewelled with the Stars', 'Silently' . . . There are verses with a touch of charm in John Mendip's *Early Poems* (Stockwell, 1s. 6d.), and another booklet of verse issued by the same publisher, at the same modest price, is John Weyland's *Death and Glory*. Eleven examples of the poet's equally modest art, in which he refuses to be cramped by his use of rhyme: and the very first line is characteristic of all: 'Alone in the room, where the clock click-clocks.' Stockwell also presents *Poems To Delight, for*

Children, by Gwendoline Jackson (2s.), about fairy glades, a fairy toadstool, a toy shop, a toby jug, and so on, sympathetically written. The title is clumsy, though, and we are not told what child-age the author had in mind. This booklet and another, *Poems of Sweet Thoughts* (1s. 6d.), by the same author, suggest that somebody at the publishers ought to put on a thinking-cap and invent alternative titles.

Ideas rather than emotion and inspiration are dominant in *Eternity to Season*, by Wilson Harris. 'As he writes his verse,' we are told in the introduction, 'he is also creating a flux of thought in which he is probing ultimate matters and asking questions of life.' The same introducer writes 'Joyce James' when he means James Joyce . . .

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PUBLIC POETRY

FROM OUR RADIO OBSERVER

'Poetry in Pubs' was a retrograde attempt to popularize poetry: environment and atmosphere did not ensure tranquility. But it anticipated the BBC's attempt to penetrate private lives. The BBC had greater scope – it could generate a sympathetic atmosphere or at worst a passive resistance. It made tentative partial experiments which have developed from an abrupt five minutes before eleven p.m. to the more recent occasional half-hours, but never rising to the complete Poetry Hour established by The Poetry Society in London and the provinces with weekly regularity from long before the BBC captured the air and had access to unlimited if not altogether practical audiences in the best of all listening place – their own homes.

The Poetry Society welcomed this approach and universal appeal, this monopolistic expansion of its pioneer policy and work, culminating recently in the series of weekly readings with the feeble, limited title of 'Heartsease'. Perhaps this timid description was deemed less obtrusive, more insinuating than the frank literal use of the term Poetry or Verse readings in this aerial approach to a populace believed to prefer buffoonery to sensibility.

We are fully aware that this tentative provision of public poetry has been greatly appreciated and enjoyed by a very large section of the community anxious and eager to hear the spoken word which is the BBC's unique privilege and duty to offer, and we trust this several times renewed series will be repeated without undue delay. They are better fitted to reach the general public than the more eclectic readings on the Home and Third Programmes, which however admirable are more limited in scope and appeal, suspected of being high-brow and academic, the selections of a profound literary critic whose preferences and prejudices are read by an impartial second party; and with too little allowance for the less cultured.

The 'Heartsease' programmes serve our purpose and our interests better and with unqualified effect. They represent everyman's approach and arrest everyman, restoring poetry (as *The Times* said finely in the first World War) to its ancient place again as the inspirer, guide, consoler of suffering struggling humanity. They are presented as well as chosen by a rarely gifted personality who has lived with poetry and made use of it from infancy – a veritable Muse with a melodious flexible voice, conveying feeling and beauty as well as meaning with every accent, fraught with significance in every word. For the enjoyment and emotion and spiritual perception engendered thereby thousands, perhaps millions, of listeners are grateful to the BBC.

The service rendered by the BBC to the individual and to poetry is beyond compare. May we be able to record its continuation and expansion and offer formative suggestions? G.K.

TOWARDS PARNASSUS:

PREMIUM COMPETITION : REPORT

NEW SERIES NO. 22

KENNEDY WILLIAMSON

The Award is made to Margaret Lees (Bowdon, Cheshire) for 'Heartbreak'.

The successful poem has not only a form which is wrought as by a craftsman, but also an elemental emotion so that deep calls unto deep. The unpretentious language is perfectly suited to the special requirements of the homespun theme. It is a notable fact that of the seventy-five words in the poem, sixty-seven are monosyllables.

Honourable mention to: Miss Mabel Parker, Winsford; James Beresford Hawkins, Newbury; Margaret Rhodes, Guernsey; Stanley Mason, Zurich; Mrs Fox-Hutchinson, Beal; Joyce Silvester, Wembley; Godfrey Turton, Oxford.

HEARTBREAK

MARGARET LEES

The clothes that people wear
  Become as much a part of them
As face or hands or hair,
And live as long
As a song
  Lives in the mind,
Undying,
Denying
  Time the right to be kind.

So when I came across
  An old and battered pair of shoes
That once were yours, my loss
Was born again
And in pain
  I turned away.
You are gone,
And upon
  This night will dawn no day.

PORTMAN SQUARE KEEPS OUT THE COLD

The fire within triumphed soundly over the howling gale without, if full houses are anything to go by. Winter has seen many candles glowing serenely in a very naughty world. Was Shakspere Shakespeare? And did the yokel who could barely get his pen round those characters create the intricate and fascinating women re-lived for us in a glowing hour in December by Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies?

Those who followed T. L. Adamson's well-documented researches into the Lord Oxford-Shakespeare controversy explained by him to us one autumn Friday, may well have asked themselves this question. Miss Ffrangcon-Davies was content to leave the brilliant images of Lady Macbeth, Portia and Queen Catharine with us. No problem there of identity. With the aid of a graceful yard or two of drapery, the authenticity of each sprang with ease from her artistry of voice and gesture.

Six nice young people showed their silver medals to good effect on another evening – after all, speech is silver – or perhaps they represented the silver threads among the gold! Charles Doran has given us two plays since December – 'The Invisible Ballet', prose but poetic, and Strindberg's *The Father* which was skilfully abridged. The inexorable logic of this old-timer is apt to creak a little in these days of blood-tests and what not: nevertheless, Graham Suter, Evelyn Bishop, Marjorie Woodall and Charles Doran, with their supporting players, gave a taut and dramatic performance. Audience Night was somewhat weatherbound, but a small company gathered round the fire and each one, including our Librarian, did his bit towards keeping the horrid weather outside.

Nineteen-fifty-five opened with a new star – Moira Lister, looking even more angelic than the most fervent TV. admirer could reasonably expect, reading her own choice which included works from poets present (Miss Madeleine Macon and M. Bogomir D'Alma) and a remarkable poem by a Zulu, Dholomo. Naturally, South African poetry was well represented and the reader served it faithfully and with a very charming modesty.

New poets and old, were represented on the last Friday in January by Paul Dehn, Michael Hamburger, Robert Armstrong – and by Keats a week earlier. The poets-in-person were so well contrasted that the work of each gained by comparison, Hamburger's deeply thoughtful and quietly spoken verses setting off the shimmering music of Paul Dehn, the sincerity of Robert Armstrong.

On the Keats night, also in January, F. Pratt Green arranged a delightful programme on 'The Golden Year of John Keats', his clear and informal commentary being reinforced by readers from the Croydon Centre: Marjorie Green, Eileen Currie, Irene Marriage, with Dr. Barry Richards reading from Keats's Letters and Ralph Lawrence adding a short critical survey.

Only once did the weather get the upper hand, and that was on 18th February, when both our President and his guest, A. E. Coppard, were snowed up, with transport at a standstill. Into the breach stepped June Franklin and Charles Doran who gave some of Mr. Coppard's own selections.

The following Friday, a piquant meeting took place between Herbert Palmer and Kenneth Hare, who have crossed pens in these pages over a certain Sir John Philpot, you may remember. Mr Palmer, in the Chair, ushered in his former adversary with the utmost chivalry and the audience greatly enjoyed Mr. Hare's lively account of Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight, that grand medieval legend which, as Mr. Palmer pointed out has carried its colours through a successful reprinting – prowess indeed in the field of literature.

In addition to Knights, we were also dazzled by a Lady. Moira Lister (a surprise item) read Guy de Maupassant's story, The Chairmender, a preview of her television contribution the following evening. The poignant irony of this masterpiece, revealed by her sensitive reading, came truly within the realm of poetry. K.V.R.

THE ALBERT RALPH KORN ESSAY AWARD

Again The Poetry Society has pleasure in announcing that through the generosity of Mr. Albert Ralph Korn, of New York, a deep lover of poetry, and a distinguished American, a new and substantial annual Award is offered to Members in any part of the world.

A prize of Twenty Pounds will be given for the best short essay on 'Clarity versus Obscurity in Poetry'. It must be original, previously unpublished, and not longer than 1,500 words.

The judges will be appointed by The Editorial Board of *The Poetry Review*. The manuscript must be typewritten and sent anonymously, with the author's name and address accompanying it in a sealed envelope. No MSS can be returned. Closing date for the award is 30th June, 1955.

The outer envelope must be addressed: 'Albert Ralph Korn Award', The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London W.1, England.

THE MENDIP PRIZE

A NEW COMPETITION

A Prize of Four Pounds for a poem has been generously offered by a Friend of Poetry who wishes to remain anonymous. The poem must be lyrical, with a pastoral theme, and not to exceed thirty lines. The age limit for competitors is seventeen to thirty, thus acting as a link between the junior and senior competitions already in existence.

The winning poem will be published in *The Poetry Review*, along with the poet's name. The Editorial Board will adjudicate, and entries must be submitted not later than 30th June, 1955. Envelopes to be marked 'Mendip Prize', and addressed to *The Poetry Review*, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1.

THE PREMIUM COMPETITION

The above competition continues as before with the total entrance fees as prize money which may be won outright by a single competitor or may be divided at the discretion of the Premium Adjudicator. An entrance fee of 2s. 6d. will be charged, and a stamped addressed envelope should be enclosed if a receipt is desired. Competitors must observe rules given in previous issues. Closing date 1st June, 1955.

(*More Competitions on page* 122)

FRIDAY EVENINGS AT PORTMAN SQUARE

Everybody welcome. Admission 1s. Non-Members 2s. 6.30 to 7.30 approx.

April	1	'April Foolery.' Wit and humour in Verse – Irene Brent and Redvers Kyle.
	15	Mystical Poetry with Kelty Macleod and Robert Bridger.
	22	'O for a Muse of Fire' – A Shakespeare Miscellany. Wilton Cole and Kathleen Penny.
	29	Poets of Australia. Dorothy Newby-Fraser and Mary Giles.
May	6	A. E. Coppard reads his own Poems and Prose – with June Franklin. Chairman: Thomas Moult.
	13	'Remembered Voices'. A Memorial reading to Caron Rock, Wrenne Jarman, E. H. W. Meyerstein.
	20	Asian Poetry, by Professor Sadler. Joyce Sagar will read the translations.
June	3	'The Vertical Man', W. H. Auden, by J. M. Purser, M.A., assisted by Senior boys of St. Clement Danes Grammar School.
	10	'Any Questions?' An informal evening with Poets in Person, arranged by Robert Armstrong.
	17	Play Scenes, Shakespeare and George Bernard Shaw, by Members of Chelsea Circle.
	24	Walt Whitman – 'The Good Grey Poet', with Sylvia Newton and Alan Phillips, arranged by Charles Doran.
July	1	A Programme arranged by F. Pratt Green (see later).
	8	Audience Night. Members are again invited to read their own or favourite Poem (limit three minutes). Chairman: Violet Adamson.

MEREDITH
Selected Poems

Chosen and Annotated by G. M. TREVELYAN, O.M.

Dr. Trevelyan's introduction to his selection will fire the imagination of many readers who have hitherto regarded Meredith as a distinguished name on an honoured tombstone of poetry, while the enthusiast will enjoy a greater appreciation of the man and his works after perusal of the learned, detailed and absorbing notes. *May*, 12*s.* 6*d.*

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WORDSWORTH
A Re-Assessment

F. W. BATESON

This scholarly re-assessment of Wordsworth as a writer and man has been the subject of considerable controversy, largely on account of the author's conclusions respecting the relationship between the poet and his sister.
'Unlike some academic critics, he writes readable and civilized English. He is informative and never dull.' – *Raymond Mortimer, 'Sunday Times'.* *Illustrated*, 21*s.*

LONGMANS

THE HOWARD PARSONS SONNET COMPETITION FOR 1954–55

The Poetry Society has the pleasure of announcing a new Competition to succeed the competition in memory of Lord Alfred Douglas for a sonnet Shakespearian or upon any subject.

The prize of Eight Guineas which is generously offered by Mr. Howard Parsons, may be divided at the discretion of the adjudicator. The winning poem or poems will be published with the awards in *The Poetry Review*. Competitors must retain copies of their poems as these cannot be returned. The sonnets should bear a definite title and not merely be marked 'Sonnet'. Not more than two sonnets may be submitted by each competitor by 30th June, 1955. Address 'Sonnet Competition', The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1. Entries should bear names and addresses of competitors. No previously published poem may be entered.

THE GREENWOOD COMPETITION FOR 1954–55

The Poetry Society is empowered by the executors of the late Mrs. Julia Wickham Greenwood to offer the sum of Twenty Pounds as the Shirley Carter Greenwood Prize for the best single poem in open competition.

Entries should be addressed 'The Greenwood Prize', 33 Portman Square, London, W.1. Only one poem may be submitted by any one competitor, the length not to exceed 250 lines; no previously published poem may be entered. The full name and address of the author must be given and a stamped addressed envelope enclosed if return of the poem is desired. If a nom-de-plume is adopted, name and address of sender must be given in a closed envelope bearing the pseudonym. The winning poem will be printed in *The Poetry Review* and may be reprinted at the discretion of the Editorial Board, who may also reserve near winners for publication in *The Poetry Review*. Closing date is 31st August, 1955.

ORIOLE PRIZE 1955

ORIOLE (the Poets' Group of the Poetry Society) offers an award of £5 for the best Mystical Poem received. This should be unpublished, and should not exceed twenty-eight lines. The competition is open to all; entrance fee 2s. 6d. per entry. The adjudicators reserve the right to divide the prize or to withhold it if no entry is of sufficient merit. Competitors must adopt a pseudonym which should appear in block capitals both on the manuscript and on a sealed envelope containing the entrant's name and address. MSS will not be returned. The winning poem will be published in *The Poetry Review*. Closing date, 31st July, 1955. Address: Oriole Prize, The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, W.1.

POET'S PLEASURE: NEWS FROM THE CENTRES

BY THE EDITORIAL STAFF

It is with appreciation that an unusual gift has been received - and accepted – at Headquarters, a photograph of Robert Browning taken after his death. The donor is Miss Hilda Frodsham, of Seaford, Sussex, who explains that three copies only of the photograph were made and the negative then destroyed by the poet's son. One of these is in the keeping of The Browning Society, and the other has belonged to the Barrett-Browning family of Woking. Miss Frodsham's copy was in the possession of

edited by Ronald McCuaig

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MACMILLAN

Miss M. Gertrude Frodsham, a Browning scholar, until her death.

The photograph now hangs permanently in the rooms of The Poetry Society at 33 Portman Square. Reports of Centre activities elsewhere are given below.

SUFFOLK

The latest news about the George Crabbe memorial, announced in our last issue, will be found in a postscript to the editorial Prelude in the foregoing pages. The Poetry Competition has been definitely inaugurated, and poems 'with a Suffolk flavour' written by Suffolk residents, are invited. It is hoped that the competition will be held annually, and the target set for donations is £300. The appeal has been widely circulated, and it is hoped that East Anglians in all parts of the world will contribute during this year of the great Suffolk poet's bicentenary.

The lecture at the November meeting of the Suffolk Poetry Society arose out of this, and was entitled 'George Crabbe, his Life in Poetry'. Mr. James Turner, the lecturer, described him as 'Suffolk's Nature poet, as much a botanist as a poet'. The Oriential Café at Ipswich was the meeting-place on this occasion and in December, when members read their own Christmas poems. Miss K. M. Turner is the hon. secretary, and her address is 1 Willoughby Road, Ipswich.

HAMPSTEAD

Dannie Abse, Anthony Rye, and Ralph Lawrence have figured in the monthly programmes during the past winter, each of them reading his own poems. On other occasions the members have contributed to the evening's pleasure: Christmas poems and music, and a reading of John Masefield's *Philip the King* (recorded and played back) are well remembered. The meetings are held at the home of the hon. secretary, Mrs. Angela Malleson, 10 Gayton Crescent, N.W.3, on the second Monday in each month except August and September. Need it be added that guests and, more especially, new members are always welcome?

WALTON AND WEYBRIDGE

'This is our fifth year,' writes Mrs. Elsie Gittens (proudly) from 28 Oatlands Drive, Weybridge, and it began with an impromptu talk on Hilaire Belloc by Mr. John Gittens. Belloc's *Cautionary Tales* are not strictly poetry, but one of them was read by the Hon. Mrs. Sylvia George, herself a poet, and the 'tale' was highly appreciated. His essay on bringing the 'Nona' into harbour showed the narrator's courage and a poet's gift of expression.

Mrs. Joan Cherry lectured in February, and Mr. Kennedy Williamson, of the Editorial Board of *The Poetry Review*, visited the Centre in March.

NATAL AND DURBAN (S.A.)

Miss Killie Campbell, sister of the one and only Roy Campbell, is a patron of this South African 'parent body', and Sir Waldron Smithers, M.P., was their patron overseas. The Natal Poetry Society and Durban Poetry Group are now well established, with Durban as the Centre. Meetings are held there at the Y.M.C.A., and social and informal gatherings at 15 Overport Drive. This is for the information of any Poetry Society member in England who may be visiting those parts of South Africa in the near future.

'We are indeed honoured to be associated with the P.S. of Great Britain,' writes Mr. Thomas H. Lawrence, who is the founder and chairman. 'The Society has done and is doing so much to further the Cause of Poetry throughout the world.' The hon. secretary, Miss I. M. Jardine, reports that meetings are well attended, and the standard of membership is high. At the moment a Natal Junior Awards Competition has been organized with the delightful purpose of discovering 'the Afrikaans and English Junior Poet Laureate.' The scheduled lectures and talks are interesting: 'Poetry and its Meaning,' 'The Nature of Drama in Poetry,' 'Modern Verse versus the Ancient Ballad,' and (how the Editorial Board wish they could attend and listen!) 'An Evening with *The Poetry Review*.'

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For others, who need a closer study of poetic forms, a Course of personal coaching by correspondence is available at moderate fees. Write to:

POETRY SECTION

57 GORDON SQUARE, W.C.1 *Telephone:* Museum 4574

REIGATE

Here's richness, as a V.I.P. said once upon a time. Gordon Daviot's *Richard of Bordeaux*; Dylan Thomas's *Under Milkwood*; Tennyson's 'Maud', 'The Lotos Eaters', and 'The Lady of Shalott'; Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Richard II*; Lewis Carroll's *The Hunting of the Snark*; Readings from Rieu's translation of *The Odyssey*; Readings from George Meredith, Matthew Arnold, and Swinburne; Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poems; 'Round the Year' in verse and song, and 'Twentieth Century Poets' (members' choice) ... What a remarkable selection of subjects for a year's programmes this prosperous Surrey Centre made in 1954! And the present year's syllabus has already gained distinction through a reading of Housman's *A Shropshire Lad* and an evening about 'The Sea' in verse, song, and music, including a piano recital. Enquiries welcomed by Mrs. M. A. Hicks, The Alton, Alma Road, Reigate, for particulars of the happy programmes in store.

NOTTINGHAM

From this flourishing Midland Centre comes more good news for the future – very good news indeed. A special Poetry Reading for the public has been arranged, with Audrey Aalbregt, Principal of the Avon Academy, Dorothy Freestone, Winifred Riley, Lake Aske, and Ronald Gill as readers. The date is 4th May, and the meeting-place the Co-operative Hall, at 7.30 p.m.

Alan Rook, the Nottingham poet and President of the Centre, is to be the chairman. Mr. Rook's play, *Robin Hood,* will be performed during the summer in the beautiful grounds of his Derbyshire home.

The success of the Spoken Festival of Poetry organized by this Centre in past years has amply justified its continuation during the same month of May – on the 21st, at the Colville St. Church Hall. The adjudicator is Mrs. Plewman, Chief Adviser to the Leicester Education Committee. These announcements come from Miss Eileen Barrowcliffe, press representative of the Centre, whose hon. secretary is Mrs. M. Riley, 25 Medina Drive, Tollerton.

*

Finally, here is a list of Centres in addition to those already mentioned:

BELFAST

Meetings monthly, Kensington Hotel, College Square. Hon. Secretary, Miss Hettie Haddock, 18 Ashley Gardens.

BOSTON (U.S.A.)

Mrs. Blanche T. Bigelow, hon. secretary, 163 Eliot Street, Milton 87, Mass, U.S.A.

BRIGHTON

Mr. P. E. Dunn, 84 Eldred Avenue, Withdean, Brighton 5.

BRONDESBURY

Readings on the first Sunday of each month at 1 Mowbray Road, N.W.6, at 4 p.m. Details from Miss Silvia Newton, L.R.A.M., at the above address.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Mrs. Van den Bergh, Little Basing, Bray, Berks., and Mrs. Day, Westwood, Windsor Road, Maidenhead.

BURGESS HILL

Meetings second Saturday in each month at Mrs. Lambert's restaurant, 45 Church Road. All enquiries to Miss K. G. Boycott, 'Twemlow', Jane Lane, Burgess Hill, Sussex.

CHICAGO (U.S.A.)

President: Ruth Crary Clough, St. Clair Hotel, Chicago 11, Ill.

DUMFRIES

Mr. Irving Miller, 35 George Street, Dumfries, will answer all enquiries.

THE POETRY SOCIETY

Founded 24th February, 1909 :: Incorporated 18th June, 1923

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Guaranteed Facing Matter, £15 per page and *pro rata*
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Type area 7 ins. deep by 4⅛ ins. wide. Column width 2 ins.
Block screen 85. Latest date for copy 7th preceding.
Press date 15th preceding

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27, Chancery Lane, London, W.C.2

Telegrams: Presreps. Holb. London *Telephone:* HOLborn 8655 & 8656

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KENSINGTON

Enquiries should be sent to the founder, Mr. A. Vivian Burbury, 12 Bassett Road, London, W.10. Meetings are held monthly on a Tuesday evening.

PITTSBURGH (U.S.A.)

Mrs. Marie Tello Phillips, 6427 Darlington Road, Pittsburgh.

SHEFFIELD

Enquiries to Miss F. G. Stimpson, 23 Silver Hill Road, Sheffield 11. Meetings: Grand Hotel, monthly.

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President, Mrs. Helen T. D. Robinson, 815 Jackson St. N., St. Petersburg 6. Florida.

TORONTO (CANADA)

All enquiries to Mr. Thos. G. Ballantyne of Apartment 201, 58 Hillside Drive, Toronto 6. Telephone: Gerrard 8877.

VANCOUVER (B.C.)

Official contact: Mrs. George Maharg, 754 East Broadway, Vancouver, B.C.

THE POETRY SOCIETY:
ANNUAL GENERAL BUSINESS MEETING

The Annual General Business Meeting of the Poetry Society (Incorporated) will be held at the offices of the Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1., on Wednesday, 25th May, 1955, at 3.0 p.m., to receive the annual financial statement, and elect the members of the General Council. Names of delegates representing Centres should be sent to the General Secretary not later than 6th April, 1955, together with names of the Centre representatives on the General Council.

Admission will be made upon production of membership cards.

Any member who wishes to bring any business before the Annual Meeting must give twenty-eight days' written notice thereof to the General Secretary. Nominations for membership to the General Council must be made by two members of the General Council or three unattached members twenty-eight days prior to the Meeting.

Any member wishing to inspect the audited Statement of Accounts before the General Business Meeting may do so at this office between the hours of 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. (Saturdays excepted), or may have a copy sent on application enclosing a stamped addressed envelope after 30th April.

– By Order of the Council.

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The Poetry Review

*

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More Poems and Prose of Distinction

KENNEDY WILLIAMSON

JOHN SMITH

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A Critical Note on a Contemporary Poet and Full Details of our Poetry Competitions.

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3. Reasonable margins and top space should be left.
4. A self-addressed envelope must always be enclosed either stamped or, if an overseas contributor, the Coupon-Response International. Otherwise, no MSS will be considered. Loose stamps cannot be regarded as a substitute. Except in rare instances an introductory letter is not necessary.
5. In their own interest writers should notice that poems over thirty lines in length have a very doubtful chance of acceptance.
6. If helpful editorial suggestions are made with a returned MS, please do not reply challenging the advice. Requests for criticism, moreover, are not invited. It should be remembered that The Poetry Society already has a well-organized service for expert advice, as announced in each issue.
7. Not more than four poems should be submitted at one time. Two is an ideal number.
8. The Editorial Board does not accept responsibility for the safe custody and return of any unsolicited MSS. Authors are requested not to write expressing anxiety lest their MS is lost in the post. MSS are seldom or never lost in the post.
9. Acceptance or rejection of a MS cannot reasonably be expected until at least three months have elapsed. A decision may take longer. Inquiries by telephone cannot be dealt with.
10. The receipt of a proof does not necessarily imply immediate publication.

THESE PAGES – AN OFFERING TO

A. E. Coppard

But love is not beauty though it is beautiful,
Nor beauty love though it is loveliness

Prelude: A LITTLE OASIS

'This is The Poetry Society – can we help you?' A smiling welcome is in the voice that responds to the telephone-caller, not the politeness of an impersonal somebody imparting a fact mechanically. 'This is The Poetry Society' – and to those who visit Thirty-three Portman Square and pass over the threshold it is as if the spacious hall greets them with a smiling welcome too. Like *The Poetry Review* the old Georgian house has been given a New Look, transfigured by the magic of a decorator – involving, of course, the painter's brush – and brightness is everywhere, and a freshness as of flowers.

At the Annual Meeting of the Society last year the President made a promise. The appearance of '33,' he announced, would soon be so changed that the older members visiting there might regain a sense of quiet grace and dignity, and newcomers be given an impression of comfort as well as authority. The promise is fulfilled. Not even the splendid banking-houses and mercantile buildings in the city of London, with all their money-bags, can outdo the result! Nor the beauty-parlours of Mayfair, either. The home of this, the premier organization of its kind in the whole world, is not easily rivalled for beauty.

The advantages of belonging to The Poetry Society were emphasized in a recent Editorial. (Membership £1 yearly, plus entrance fee 2s. 6d.). They include the discovery of a little oasis in London's Sahara. 'This is The Poetry Society – can we help you?'

•

Here is a very short story from Scotland. Sandy was a bridegroom, and Andy his best man. As they waited at the church for the bride, Andy noticed that Sandy was becoming agitated and downcast. 'What's the matter, Sandy?' he whispered: 'have ye lost the ring?' 'Nah,' muttered Sandy, 'I've lost ma enthoosiasm.'

We are reminded of Sandy in reverse as we observe that nearly all our retiring General Councillors were re-elected at the Annual Meeting (see cover, page two). The explanation is simple: they had

justified the members' confidence in them as earnest and loyal workers, not weary in well doing: unlike Sandy, none had lost their *enthoosiasm.*

*

The exact words used recently in *The Times Literary Supplement* about this periodical are: '*The Poetry Review* is firmly anchored as a kind of Royal Academy.'

We remember that a great artist, Augustus John, decided to become an R.A. after many years spent by his own preference in the wilderness, so that if our esteemed contemporary has intended a compliment – and it may be so – let compliments be added. We quote from two of many that have come to us since we changed the general appearance and lay-out:

'May I congratulate The Poetry Review on her new dress. I am not sure whether the line is A or H, but in any case the effect is vastly becoming. The female half of your audience will know what I am talking about!'

That was written by Miss Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies, the distinguished actress, in a letter of apology for her inability to be present at the Annual Luncheon (see page 182). Such light-hearted appreciation is our encouragement, nor does the compliment implied in another letter affect our sense of the fitness of things:

'May I congratulate you on the new cover? It is much nicer than the old orange, which was not a peaceful colour to leave about in one's sitting-room . . .'

*

'Outstanding,' was the verdict by Miss Margaret Rawlings at The Poetry Society's Gold Medal Examination on May 24th, when Victoria Watts was awarded first place among the eighteen who, as holders of the Adult Silver Medal for Distinction in the Art of Speaking Verse, had entered for the higher prize. The two poems chosen by Miss Watts were Wordsworth's 'The Solitary Reaper' and Thomas Moore's 'The Sale of Loves.' Romayne Forsyth and Wendy Jubb, who also won gold medals, chose Martin Armstrong in addition to Shakespeare, Francis Thompson, and Tennyson.

The selection of Mr. Armstrong's poetry will remove any impression that our young students overlook the moderns. Contemporaries who were given prominence by various competitors included Robert Frost, T. S. Eliot, Dylan Thomas, Francis Brett Young, Edith and Osbert Sitwell, Vernon Watkins, C. Day Lewis, W. H. Auden, Louis MacNeice, and Alex Comfort.

*

The sixth of May was a great day for one of our distinguished poet-members, Mrs. McGrigor Phillips, otherwise Dorothy Una

Ratcliffe. The University of Leeds bestowed on Mrs. Phillips the degree of Doctor of Laws, and in presenting her to the Princess Royal the Librarian spoke as follows:

> Your Royal Highness and Chancellor . . . Mrs. McGrigor Phillips, poet and friend of poets, has prepared 'volumes of new books': she found, or rather created, in Yorkshire a microcosm of literature and art, and a vigorous school of poets and painters has owed much to her encouragement and hard-working editorship. Her own writings in verse and prose reflect her great love of 'the lonely sea and the sky', of the wind on the heath, and of the grave beauty of the Yorkshire dales.

Dorothy Una Ratcliffe, who has lately transferred her home from Yorkshire to Scotland, is still President of the Yorkshire Dialect Society. It is hoped that one of her recent poems will appear in a forthcoming number of *The Poetry Review*.

*

It seems but a little while since Mrs. B. P. Moore was a member of our General Council and a diligent worker on behalf of the Oriole Group – hardly longer, indeed, since a Friday audience heard her read some of her own poems: and now she has passed from us. With deep regret we report that she died on April 30th, 'almost suddenly.'

An obituary in *The Times* described Fanny Moore as 'a European in the best sense.' She was born in Hamburg, her father being a distinguished German economist. 'She became an active member of The Poetry Society,' the obituary continued, 'and in 1933 published a volume of poems, *Ghosts*, including some of very decided distinction; later she contributed poems and articles to various periodicals . . .

'Always much interested in the plastic arts, she in the last years of her life seriously took up painting, and there, too, won the praise of good judges. Few that knew her will ever forget her vivid and charming character, dominated by keen intellectual and artistic interests, with a conspicuous business capacity, and a widely exercised gift for friendship.'

The many members of The Poetry Society who had the privilege of her comradeship for a few brief years offer their sympathy to Mr. Moore, her husband, a distinguished Civil servant who, at Balliol College, Oxford, won the Hertford, Craven, Ireland, and Derby scholarships.

*

Postscripts. – Geoffrey Johnson, of the Editorial Board of this periodical, is the author of a new volume of poems, *The Magic Stone*, which will be reviewed in the next number . . . An author and one-time journalist in London, Edward Davison, has been elected President of The Poetry Society of America . . . Stephen Graham's new novel, *Pay as You Run*, will be published in August . . .

THE EDITORIAL BOARD

MEN FORGET

PHOEBE HESKETH

Now men forget the land that mothered them,
Received their seed through patient years of growth,
Forget the eternal sky that covered them;
And stand another round and fling an oath
And spit upon the floor, yet not long since
A Hebridean mother took her child
New-born to face the noon-day sun, and bent
His brow against the soil, against the wild
Wet island wind that was his baptism.
There was no Christ to walk that pagan shore,
No cross whereon to hang the heart's deceit,
No loving Jesus to absolve the whore –
Forgiveness waiting pale-faced on the street.

Mankind enlightened? We are worse than they
Who grubbed a living from the willing soil
Or clawed among the cold shells in the bay,
Whose daily prayer was everlasting toil.

Mankind enlightened? We have quenched the flame
With easy comfort cushioning the start
Though devastation in the unsacred name
Of science mocks the cratered human heart.

We fly the earth and rocket to the moon,
Explore the ocean and congratulate
Ourselves that of ourselves we are so soon
The masters of our pigmy human state.

Yes, men forget the littleness of man
And swell beyond capacity to know
That man knows nothing and his mortal span
Offers redemption and the chance to grow.
We all forget that of ourselves alone
We are no more than dust and each high deed
Is not achieved by virtue of ourselves
But breaks beyond us as a potent seed
Has strength to push the world aside, the power
Which man claims for himself is Love's alone
And trembles through dark places into flower –
We are the fruit another Hand has sown.

IN THEIR GLAD PLAYING-TIME

THOMAS MOULT

In their glad playing-time, like windflowers down the billowy April blowing,
The children come where the grass grows deep.
Bewitched in the dream of their frolic and laughter, to this green glowing
Sun-field they come, and along the cool
Green hedgeway, nor knowing
That here, under the grass and the windflowers, the strong and the beautiful
Lie in their sleep.

Why should we speak of the sleepers to these, the winsome and white
Girls dancing and the mischievous boys, why should our shadow fall on their game?
They are so heedless of life and lavish with Time, already they outrun
The flying hours past the edge of their eager sight
In their little brief morning of brightness, their light.
They would only look into our old eyes with eyes quickly troubled, they would go whence they came
And forget in the sun.

But one, perchance, might linger and speak as a child speaks, with words wonder-bound,
Ah no, we would answer, they sleep for ever:
And all that is lovely and yours is theirs as they rest, the rain
And the dayshine unfailingly soak and sweeten this secret ground.
Nay, child, their sleep is sound,
Neither do they feel, they hear not their friends, nor see the world again.
But the green-golden loveliness never
Shall desert them, nothing deserts them, but pain.

Nothing deserts them but pain.

TO MEMBERS WHO ARE AUTHORS

A small and permanent Exhibition of Books written by Members of The Poetry Society has been arranged in the Hall at 33 Portman Square. All Members who are Authors are invited to deposit one copy of each or any of their works in poetry or relating to poetry with the General Secretary and Registrar (Mrs. Graddon) for inclusion in this Exhibition.

FOUR POEMS

ALEXANDER BUIST

FOR KATHLEEN FERRIER

As I sat last night, listening to the deathless story
 Of Man outstretching to the unattained,
Moving slowly, arduously, towards the unstained
 Purity of Everest, to touch her hidden glory;
I thought most sadly of how, a year ago,
 I answered, in the same place, to your voice
Calling us upward always
 Towards its own perfection:
Tragic, yet fitting, that by the last steep chimney,
 Oxygen spent, your sole unaided courage
Enabled you to stand above the snow-rack,
 Upright and unafraid, Earth's overture completed.

STOCKTAKING

For me shines this strange, late flowering,
 Mitigation of long disappointment,
 Promise of fruition of youthful dreams.

For you start asunder shackles self-imposed;
 Love pays no heed to practical expediency,
 Sudden, comprehensive, merciless in attack.

For neither wait the far-flung wide horizons,
 Sure havens of escape, the absolute solution;
 Always will be weariness, of man at odds with his surroundings,
 Yet also the lap of waters, deep orchards in moonlight,
 Beauty to mark and mould, the unwavering spark within.

ELEVENSES

My window-sill is a snack-bar; precisely at eleven
Appear the matronly blackbird, christened Emily,
Starlings, robins, chaffinches, greater and lesser tits.

There is little sound, no song; an occasional
Scuffle or ill-bred squawk at loss of an outsize morsel;
Silently through the windless air
Each customer sweeps away, and on a powdered branch
Meditates for a space, puffed out digestively.

In our larger world, progress is blanketed
By an unmelting weight of substitutes;
We sweep the earth, the sea, the sky, the underground,
In search of panaceas for this and that,
While, most of the time, the crumbs, the rich, sustaining lard,
Wait on the heart-sill, precisely at eleven.

THE UNTRODDEN SNOW

No one has visited the house to-day;
Last night's deep snowfall lingers undisturbed
By mark of man or beast or bird;
The gate is sunk a little lower
Upon its broken hinges; a withered plant
Droops crazily from a crack in one half-ruinous pillar.

Untended pine and cedar, gaunt in the failing light,
Conceal the white-harled mass; a lamp gleams from the kitchen,
Blue on the snow; the front rooms are not used
Since the master died; his sticks and pipes
In hall and study are dusted every day;
After the evening meal mistress and maids
Talk poultry, plan the year's spring cleaning,
Or skim the local 'Mail', with 'Life and Work' on Sundays.

Perhaps, as one grows really old,
It matters less to be cut off by weather;
The house stands up a side-road,
Three-quarters vacant, feminine, bereft;
Soft snow muffles a footstep . . .
Yet I could wish that this were not untrodden.

ONE AIM EMERGES

ROBERT GREACEN

One aim emerges sharp as day
As elemental, clean and full:
To write one line, hard, beautiful,
Simple and naked as the sky.

One aim alone, dominant as light:
Emotion caged but not destroyed.
Then issue through the windless void
A flash that lacerates the night!

ROADSIDE

H. E. A. PLATT

Beyond high hedges and the one gate through them
A steep field in between two woods
Holds and considers,
As though within cupped hands,
All spring's subconscious landscape of birdsong,
A whole memory in spring-leaf.

Here absolute good draws growth
From roots held deep in cold evil
And true growth takes its life from dying
At the wild-flower's briefest root of ecstasy
And a dumb praise of God fulfils all feeling
With the whole glory in sunlight.

The stressed lines of form from use
Have first to make exact statement.
Then, in reverse,
Athwart the context of purpose or result,
They re-group with awareness
That is another mind's time.

QUESTION

KENNETH L'ESTY

You ask how much I love. How can I say?
I am not God; I have no powers divine.
He made His world before the seventh day;
In seven years I have scarce started mine.
Can I explain how two can yet be one?
Is there pre-ordination? Can I tell?
Is there one God or many? Is there none?
Do we create our Heaven or our Hell?
How many stars are there that shed their light?
How many, distance-dimmed, I cannot see?
My love for you? Its length? Its breadth? Its height?
I have no measure for Infinity . . .
The Universe, dear Heart, the Firmament
Know not the limits of my love's extent.

VALLØ CASTLE

NAOMI MITCHISON

In the great garden by the northern sea
Where ropes of perfume twist from tree to tree
Trapping the heart in over-full delight,
  The ladies walk, gently by lake and lea,
The ladies walk before the fall of night:
The night of nixies when the white fog creeping
Lifts arms to twine round a beloved sleeping,
To vanish with the faint and firstling light
Between the ladies' curtains early seeping,
While yet the ladies dream their lives away.
But oh the garden roses glow so bright
In the great garden in the heat of day!

DAVID'S LAMENT

FRANCES BAVIN

Oh Absalom, your hair has flung
A treacherous noose across the branch.
The arrow of your soul is shot
From your young body's bended bow
That swings so slowly to and fro
Under the trees.
Between the leaves the shadows squeeze
Their difficult tears, and blot
The ground with grief
For your young years.

The scattered spikes of sunlight shiver
Their crystal points against the brief
Enamelled emerald of each leaf,
Their shining darts unpocketed in the quiver
Of your young years.

Oh archer, you have overshot the mark!
Your arrow has the uncertain dark
For target won.
Oh Absalom, my son, my son!

AMENOPHIS

E. B. W. CHAPPELOW

The Pharoah Amenophis,
Called the Magnificent,
Long since sat on a golden throne,
Splendid with ornament,

And throned in equal splendour
Sat lovely by his side
Queen Tyi, the Mitannian,
Queen Tyi, the world's pride.

His captains and his chariots,
His men of the spear and bow,
Went north and south and east and west
And laid his foemen low,

Till the Nations of the Nine Bows,
The lord of Nineveh,
And even the king of Babylon,
Were not so great as he.

From Libya to sea-girt Cyprus,
From Ophir to Lake Van,
From Sidon to Euphrates,
His royal mandate ran,

And Minos the great Cretan
Sent him rare merchandise
From Knossos and from Phaestos
In white-sailed argosies;

Chased goblets, cunning ivories
He brought him to Nile's mouth,
And the frizzled woolly Negroes
Brought him gold-dust from the south,

And aromatic spices
They brought, Arabia's prize,
And the fans were waved behind him,
The fans of peacock dyes.

The shaven priests burnt incense
And he snuffed the incense up,
And spake his dooms and feasted,
And drank from an emerald cup.

And he built him a painted temple
Out in the western plain
And set to watch and ward it
Colossal statues twain,

That men might know hereafter
The king who was a god,
The wielder of the flail and crook,
Who crushed men with his nod.

But gods there are and no gods,
And the gods of mortal breath,
The god-kings men have fashioned,
Like all must come to death.

So the great king passed and was buried
And lay in a columned tomb,
Hewn in the rock of the Theban hills,
To wait the crack of doom.

And the lovely queen died also
And their son reigned in their stead,
And the glory and might of both of them
Were as an old word said.

And a new king pillaged the temple
And pilfered its polished blocks,
And shattered the towering pylons
That were meant to be as rocks,

And the shifting sand stole round it,
And where its shrines had been
Was the jackal's cry in the silence
And the horned moon's silver sheen.

But had that king not shattered it,
Time would, Time stronger than men,
Time the victorious aggressor,
Who makes men's monuments vain.

But the things of the spirit he slays not;
He cannot destroy men's thought;
The dreams, the songs and the beauty
He cannot bring to naught;

He cannot dissolve the idea,
The child of the brain and soul,
The good thoughts or thoughts evil
Of the saint, the rogue and the fool.

And though those giant statues,
Motionless, gazing out,
As though their granite bulk would live
Till the world is put to rout,

At last will crumble and tumble
Like all things under the sun,
The image of King Amenophis
In the thought of the years will live on.

WHERE ONLY SHADOWS CLIMB THE STAIRS

MARIE TELLO PHILLIPS

Where only shadows climb the marble stairs
Once far-famed beauties rustled silken gowns;
Now thick dust gathers here, and no one cares;
The homeless without shelter meet with frowns.

Exotic flowering gardens flank the place,
And vacant seats in shade invite a view
Of sky and shore where sea-foam patterns lace
Upon a beach spanned by a dome of blue.

A man had built a mansion on the sand,
And filled it with rare treasures culled from art.
Cement and stone will crumble on his land
And will not long outlast his troubled heart.
Yet here his lonely monument still looms
Without a soul to fill its empty rooms.

HANS ANDERSEN'S BIRTHPLACE

RICHARD CHURCH

Some people are sceptical about the celebration of anniversaries of any kind. They say that such chronological enthusiasm is forced and artificial. I don't agree. Life is a very crowded affair, and we are always at our wits' end how to accommodate ourselves to the multifarious interests that assail us. How, then, can we retain a hold upon our vast treasury of memories without some form of mechanism to sort them out, and to bring them up from time to time, if only for a momentary attention, a few moments indeed, but enough to recall the first occasion, the original experience, that brought into our lives something which had not been there before? I suspect that those cavillers about centenaries would look down their noses if their family forgot their birthdays!

So I was not impressed when a friend in London recently snorted to me about 'this fuss' being made over the hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of the birth of Hans Christian Andersen. He was born at Odense, on the island of Funen in Denmark. It must have been a quiet spot in those days, with Copenhagen remote across the flat stretch of shallow water that had to be crossed by sailing boat, a passage that takes an hour even to-day in the powerful steam-ferry.

I was there only three years ago, lecturing my way round the Danish universities and English clubs, with a leap across to south Sweden to speak at Lund and Halsingborg (the latter close to the Danish shore, opposite Hamlet's home of Elsinore). I stayed, for headquarters, at the miniature palace in Copenhagen which is the British Embassy. It is snatched straight out of one of Andersen's fairy tales. It is white and gold, with a ballroom where the Snow Queen must surely have danced. Out of my window, I looked down on a small square to a statue of Niels Gade, the Danish composer and pianist (also professor) who received another genius from Odense not so long after the time of Andersen, a poor peasant boy named Carl Nielsen, whose music is now one of the principal assets in Danish cultural life. He is to be compared with Dvořàk, as a musician of natural fecundity, pouring out melodic wealth from a soul given to simplicity and happiness.

Odense boasts a flourishing English club, and I was invited there to speak. How glad I am of that visit, for the journey there, across the straits of The Great Belt (some fifteen miles) between Korsor in Zealand and Nyborg in Funen carries one not only over shallow water but also over Time itself. That passage is through a world of mother-of-pearl, with everything distant, the only nearby object being

a rocky island with a fortress obviously peopled by the same sort of wooden soldiers, out of a chip-box, as one sees every morning at noon changing guard in the palace courtyard of Amalienborg, in Copenhagen, just behind my temporary home, the Snow Queen's Palace.

Zealand, the island where the capital of Denmark stands, is a gay, sandy place, with pine woods, silver birches, and modern villas built by architects who have let themselves go in fantasy and fun. I visited the architect who designed the interior of the United Nations building in New York. His home was another piece of fairyland, but streamlined. I could not make up my mind whether I was indoors or out as I sat at luncheon, feeding off queer-shaped black dishes, for the interior was full of plants growing up screens and round windows. Every home in Copenhagen is a winter-garden. Half the vitality of the Danes and Swedes is spent in combating the degree of latitude, and the climate resulting from that remoteness from the Equator.

On arrival in the Island of Funen I at once realized the difference in natural character between the two islands of Zealand and Funen. I quickly had the impression of being back home in England, or at least the Isle of Wight. The country was gently undulating, green and studded with primroses, small cottages, dainty farms, newly washed cattle. I was certain that, like the Danish soldiers, it all came out of a playbox, to serve as a background for one of Andersen's tales.

Of course, that was mere fancy, and the loneliness, the remoteness, gradually began to make itself felt; that spirit which permeates not only the Tales but also Nielsen's music. The boyhood of both these immortals was a lonely one, with dreams in a solitude that forced them to look towards Copenhagen as towards a Promised City paved with gold. Both got there eventually, but the gold proved to be of an inferior currency.

I must confess that Odense was, from an architectural point of view, somewhat disappointing. It was a hugger-mugger town, the streets crowded together, and the centre of the town lacking in significance and space. The only really interesting features were the birthplace of Andersen, and the Grand Hotel, rightly famed as one of the most comfortable and efficient in Europe.

The home of the poet (as King Frederick rightly called Andersen in a broadcast on his birthday) is a tiny cottage now embedded in excrescences that comprise a well organized museum containing everything reliquary of the man. But this core of the national monument is still a humble shoemaker's cottage, the very building where the family all slept in one room, the child-parents (for the father was only twenty-two, and the mother still younger, when Hans was born), and the youngsters. The father died when Hans was eleven, and after that the prospect was a hungry one. The boy set off for the capital

(that Mecca of his hopes), intending to become an opera singer. But his voice betrayed him, fortunately for the rest of the world.

King Frederick heard of the precocious boy (whom some people thought to be mad) and sent him, free of fees, to the grammar school at Slagelse. That gesture is characteristic of the informality of the Danish community. Royal persons to-day cycle about the streets of Copenhagen, unattended. That, I think, is a concrete example of a constitutional government, with benevolent paternalism as its corner-stone.

The school-days were not wholly successful, for the boy was wayward and seemingly stupid. All his life he remained unable to come to grips with the common-sense way of looking at things. He was controlled by fantasy, obsessions (he always carried a rope during his travels, for fear of the rooms he was sleeping in being trapped by fire), and absurd passions, such as his infantile love for the singer Jenny Lind, the Swedish Nightingale. But when he was twenty-eight, and had returned to Copenhagen and begun his career as a writer (but *only* begun), the King gave him a small stipend in order to travel abroad. Thus he was able to reach Rome, where he wrote his first novel, a success.

From that time, at the age of thirty, he turned his attention to the tales for children, but these sold slowly at first. He therefore turned back to novel writing, with some further success. Meanwhile, his fairy-tales were gradually making their way, and with two more collections, his fame was firmly established throughout Europe. After that, he became a world figure, an immortal, perhaps a little touched with *grotesquerie* because of his oddities of character. When he stayed with Dickens for five weeks at Gadshill, the English genius found the Danish genius somewhat heavy in the hand, and the Dickens children voted him a bore.

Undoubtedly he suffered from persecution mania, and that always becomes trying to people in contact with it. I must say, however, that when I looked at his hat, his walking-stick, his travelling-bag, and that tell-tale coil of rope, in the museum in Odense, my heart bled for him.

*

We welcome the appearance of *Ore*, a brave venture in imaginative publication. Its main interests are poetry and criticism. It is definitely non-traditional in its preferences, and in order to understand the poems which are printed, one needs, apparently, knowledge of some secret code to which only a small group of exponents is privy. One does derive the impression, however, that those behind the magazine are passionately sincere, and are using words with a new symbolism which is exciting to them. Copies of *Ore* may be obtained at one shilling each, post paid, from 73 Coleshill Road, Teddington, Middlesex.

THE OLD GYPSY

RITA SPURR

An old, old gypsy
Leather-faced,
Lank, oily hair
Fringing the Roman skull,
Held out in bony claw
A tambourine;

Silently,
Moving her long, brown skirts,
Still with a rhythmic grace
In tune with nature.

She peered through tawny mask
All seared with lines,
Like bleaching cords
Binding the dark skin texture
On to the structure of the bone.

Black, pin-point eyes
Pierced through to mine –
Mine, newly dark
With knowledge
Of the one enemy
She still must fear.

And quickly,
As I dropped the coin
Into the tambourine,
She turned away,
Recoiling
From the glimpse of death
Housed in another's eye;

As if the one short step
Which lay before,
Was yet,
Through all her years
And all her cunning,
An unknown chasm
In a world
Of confident seasons.

She fled,
The lean, old gypsy;
But our eyes had met
In depths of silence,
And we are familiar
Till the end of time.

SÉANCE

HERBERT BLUEN

Like some soft cloak, the darkness wraps us round,
And in the hush, we hear the medium speak
In tones imbued with strange electric force.

Our nerves and muscles tensed to meet the day,
Are now relaxed, as just before a sleep
We near the frontiers of some world unknown.

By seas of loneliness once islanded,
We wait the message, banal, sad, or gay,
And doubt, believe, or dimly comprehend.

Is this the truth, or some factitious flower
Of sweet delusion that beguiles the sense,
Like moonlight on some vast uncharted sea?

MAIDEN OF LAPIDOS

PAMELA CLEAVER

She walked on the edge of the foam line
Where the pebbles shone with sea-water,
She stooped now and then, and picked up a shell
Or a reddish-brown stone.
Humming an old tune, she walked
The full length of the sea-shore at Lapidos,
Choosing cornelians and sea shells
To make her a necklace.

Maiden of Lapidos, with your fistful of treasure,
For each of your fingers
A thousand years stretched between us.

'ET IN PHILISTIA EGO'

CHRISTOPHER THACKER

I went to Famagusta, city of shades,
And yet I have not been there,
For when we reached this city of shades,
They stripped the ruins bare,
As bare as ruins anywhere.

They took me to the Cathedral,
We stood and sucked an ice,
We stood and snapped the Cathedral,
They asked me 'Did I think it nice?'
I believe the Cathedral was nice.

I do not know what I would have seen
Alone in this many-ghosted town,
What spirits my anxious eyes had seen,
Had I come here on my own,
Walking these shadow-streets alone.

DEEP FJORD

MARGARET HOPE

The fjord's still surface lay smooth as the face of a child,
  Placidly smiling up at the ardent sun.
Slowly we drifted nearer the rockfast wild
  Sheer shore of the water, where cliffs to the black deep run.

All was sweet summery peace and contentment untold,
  And the light glittered up from the water with shimmer of steel;
Till I glanced overside, and my startled gaze shied to behold
  A weird world all watchful, far under our shadowing keel.

Surging and gliding slow in primeval swaying,
  The swing of the ocean that cradled the world's first life –
Dim slithery creatures of darkness, blind impulse obeying,
  Coiling and writhing in endless and soundless strife . . .

So sometimes, in talk with a stranger, a word may reveal
  Incredible vistas of mystery, down those calm eyes.
Look neither too deep nor too long; let the surface conceal
  Enigmas whose portent we never were meant to surmise!

THE POET, THE SAINT AND THE MODERN WORLD

STUART HOLROYD

I

As man becomes more subtle-minded the language which he uses to communicate his thoughts must necessarily change in order to accommodate them. Man's knowledge, both of the world within and the universe outside himself, has extended in the present century with a rapidity surpassing even that of the Renaissance. The task of mirroring the heart and mind of his age has consequently presented more of a challenge to the artist than ever before.

Many artists have taken the way of escape; baffled by the complexity of life they have cultivated a secure detachment. But some of them have grappled with the problems which life in the modern world presents to the individual. Two poets who have sounded these problems are T. S. Eliot and Rainer Maria Rilke. A study and comparison of their work throw significant light on certain aspects of twentieth century thought and afford a clear insight into the problems which face the sensitive and religiously-inclined individual.

In this essay I concentrate on the books which mark the zenith of each poet's achievements, respectively the *Four Quartets* and the *Duino Elegies*. Since both parts of my study are not being published together a few words of explanation may be helpful. This, the first part, is devoted mainly to Rilke, to a brief sketch of the literary background of the two poets and an explanation of some ideas which they have in common. Part Two is a consideration of T. S. Eliot's peculiar achievement (which, I may say in anticipation, is religious rather than poetic. By the 'saint' of the title I mean Mr. Eliot himself), and I shall attempt to exhibit how religious experiences of very diverse kinds may lead to the discovery of truths which, though different and apparently absolute, are in fact of equal validity.

Rilke was a dedicated artist. He was a solitary, a mystic, always a poet of unimpeachable integrity, at his highest a sublime visionary. There is no doubt that he was more exclusively a poet than Mr. Eliot. By that I do not mean that he is superior, but that his poetic personality is integral and consistent.

In his early autobiographical novel, *The Notebook of Malte Laurids Brigge*, Rilke wrote that 'verses amount to so little when one begins to write them young. One ought to wait and gather sense and sweetness a whole life long, and a long life if possible, and then, quite at the end, one might perhaps be able to write ten good lines.' Towards the end of his life Rilke wrote not simply ten good lines, but ten

considerable poems. These were the *Duino Elegies*. As the story of how he came to write them casts much light on the ideas which he expresses in the poem, I will restate the facts recorded in the fragment entitled 'Experience'.

He recalls that in the garden of the Castle Duino, some time in 1912, he chanced to rest himself in the forked branches of a tree. He experienced the strange sensation of faint vibrations passing into him from the tree's interior, and felt that he was somehow on the other side of Nature. He regarded all the objects around him with an unfamiliar, detached vision. The flight of a bird, the shape of a path winding through the garden, were the things which engaged his attention, seeming to be tremendously meaningful merely because they were there. Everything he saw had its own independent and significant existence: everything was bound together by a pervasive harmony. It was to express this experience that the *Duino Elegies* were begun, and at a time of similar illumination, ten years later, he completed them.

In these elegies Rilke presents a picture of what he believes to be a healthy world. The half-life which most people live is repugnant to him, with its accent on money and pleasure, its attempt to exclude suffering and death, and all that is mysterious and inexplicable. His poem is an affirmation of death as well as of life, of suffering as well as joy, for everything has its place in that extended Whole which is beyond the apprehension of the normal human consciousness and is the object of the poet's vision. To Rilke the Angel was the Supreme Being (he emphasizes that he does not mean by this the Angel of Christian mythology). In the Angel the transformation of the visible into the invisible is consummated. That was the purpose of life for Rilke: to experience everything in the visible world so intensely that the reality with which he invested it *within* himself superseded whatever external reality it might possess. He felt, deep within himself, the unity which binds together all Being. His experience in the castle Duino made him feel at one with everything in the Universe. In the seventh Elegy he cries:

> Oh, to be dead at last and endlessly know them,
> all the stars!

Death was to him the unillumined side of life. There is no Beyond, everything is *here*, within. Death is always with us, the new-born child carries within itself the burgeoning seed of its death, and the adults who seek to ignore it misrepresent reality. Earthly life is transient, yes, but it is not meaningless, for 'transitoriness is everywhere plunging into a profound Being.' It is only through the efforts of a succession of transient beings like ourselves that the all-important work of transformation could be accomplished.

The differences between the analytical American poet and the visionary Austrian will be now apparent to most readers. Both are religious poets, but for Rilke 'religion is something infinitely simple, simple-souled . . . When the Arab turns at certain hours towards the East, that is religion.' But for Mr. Eliot religion is conformity, unquestioning belief in the doctrines of the Church. Rilke's religious experience is of a more primitive order; it is a kind of sublimated animism. Mr. Eliot would probably consider it to be heresy. It has more in common with Zen Buddhism than with Christianity. When one thinks of Gotama, the Lord Buddha, holding up a flower before the assembled congregation and remaining silent, we feel that there is a tradition within which Rilke's attitude to existence would be understood.

But the religious affinities between the two poets are to be dealt with later. Here we are concerned with those other similarities which, though perhaps more superficial, are nevertheless illuminating and provide a necessary background to our further study.

A recurrent theme in the *Four Quartets* is that of the insufficiency of language for the poet's purpose:

> Words strain,
> Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
> Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
> Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
> Will not stay still.

All modern poets have been concerned with this problem of how to express in words their profoundest thoughts and feelings. The answer was provided by primitive man when he found his crude, developing language inadequate: through symbols. In the second elegy Rilke contemplates a Greek sculpture and wishes that the modern artist could find, as the Greeks did, external symbols for the life within:

> If only we too could discover some pure, contained,
> narrow, human, little strip of orchard
> in between river and rock! For our heart transcends us
> just as it did those others. And we can no longer
> gaze after it into figures that soothe it, or godlike
> bodies, wherein it achieves a grander restraint.

That both poets were concerned with the same problem is not coincidence, but it suggests that they both inherited the ideas of the French *fin de siècle* poets who may be grouped together under the general title of Symbolists. Mr. Eliot acknowledges his debt to Jules Laforgue, and Rilke spent many of the early years of this century in Paris. There was more in Symbolism than the word immediately suggests: a definite attitude to life shared by the writers of a period. It is expressed in Villiers de l'Isle Adam's dramatic poem 'Axel':

'Live? Our servants will do that for us . . . Oh, the external world!' For the Symbolist living was an irksome necessity, people were stupid and insensitive, and art was the only justification of life. Rilke and Eliot retained the artistic ideals of the Symbolists as well as much of their despair, but they felt it incumbent to overcome despair and affirm the importance of life. This is not easy for one to achieve who has to begin by accepting all the pain and horror of the modern world. It is not easy to remain sanguine and realize that by accepting the general standards of values we must emphasize the wrong things, and that reality eludes those millions of people who are 'distracted from distraction by distraction'. But in the *Duino Elegies* and the *Four Quartets* the pain and horror are acknowledged, faced and overcome. Both poems are ultimately optimistic and the fact that the poets have the insight to make them so is a tribute to their power.

In Dostoevsky's novel, *The Possessed,* Kirillov replies to Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch when he is asked if he believes in a future eternal life:

> 'No, not in a future eternal life, but in eternal life here. There are moments, you reach moments, and time suddenly stands still, and it will become eternal.'
>
> 'You hope to reach such a moment?'
>
> 'Yes.'
>
> 'That'll scarcely be possible in our time,' responded Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, slowly and dreamily; the two spoke without the slightest irony. 'In the Apocalypse the angel swears that there will be no more time.'
>
> 'I know. That's very true; distinct and exact. When all mankind attain happiness then there will be no more time, for there'll be no need of it, a very true thought.'
>
> 'Where will they put it?'
>
> 'Nowhere. Time's not an object but an idea. It will be extinguished in the mind.'

As usual, Dostoevsky was ahead of his age. The philosophy of the eternal present has had a great vogue in this century. Bergson's thought, Einstein's theory of Relativity as interpreted by Minkowski, J. W. Dunne's experiments with dreams, have all contributed to the overthrow of the classical conception of Time. So when Mr. Eliot begins the *Four Quartets* with the words:

> Time present and time past
> Are both perhaps present in time future,
> And time future contained in time past.

he is repeating ideas which are commonplace to the scientists and philosophers of his age. Similarly with Rilke when he wrote in a letter to his Polish translator: 'We, the men of the present and to-day, we are not for one moment content in the world of Time, nor are we fixed in it; we overflow continually towards the men of the past,

towards our origin and towards those who apparently come after us.'

Man has always tried to exclude from his mind the thought that there is no sequel to this brief earthly life. Consequently he has welcomed ideas which offered him assurance of immortality. The new time-philosophy, of course, is admirably suited to this purpose. Both our poets, being religious, are deeply concerned with the problem of death, and both of them have found their solution.

For Mr. Eliot there are two possible ways of apprehending 'the point of intersection of the timeless with time' and thus overcoming death: the visionary way of the poet or the disciplined, ascetic way of the saint. In *The Family Reunion* Agatha puts the two together:

> There are hours when there seems to be no past or future,
> Only a present moment of pointed light
> When you want to burn. When you stretch out your hand
> To the flames. They only come once,
> Thank God, that kind. Perhaps there is another kind,
> I believe, across a whole Tibet of broken stones
> That lie, fang up, a lifetime's march.

Time, as Kirillov said, can be extinguished in the mind. Mr. Eliot tells us of the two alternative ways of effecting this extinction, the poet's and the saint's. Both result in the realization that time is not an external fact but a condition of man's mind, one of the things which distract his attention from the ultimate realities. The same ideas are implied in Rilke's poem, but he adds that all people and creatures possessing the enviable undivided consciousness – animals, children, unrequited lovers – are thereby released from the tyranny of time and of death:

> Free from death.
> We alone see that; the free animal
> has its decease perpetually behind it
> and God in front, and when it moves, it moves
> into eternity, like running springs.
> We've never, no, not for a single day,
> pure space before us, such as that which flowers
> endlessly open into: always world,
> and never nowhere without no: that pure,
> unsuperintended element one breathes,
> endlessly knows, and never craves. A child
> sometimes gets quietly lost there, to be always
> jogged back again. Or someone dies and *is* it.
> For, nearing death, one perceives death no longer,
> and stares – perhaps with large brute gaze.
> Lovers – were not the other present, always
> blocking the view! – draw near to it and wonder . . .

ROMANCE

W. H. HAMILTON

Once ere my years were six
My kinsfolk took me for a ride by train
Where long green meadows mix
With rivulets, woodlands, rich acres of shining grain
And heather-purpled plain,
Through a large country, later beloved and comely
Then to a child for its colour
Though the high clouds above frowned heavy and dumbly
Upon that day, and duller
Than summer whispered to a lifeless brain
In the grave long lain.

Then to my infant thought
Fairies had but new-yielded to the Warrior;
Not yet had I forgot
The gnomes, giants, ogres crowded behind the barrier
Whereat I had been tarrier:
But stories of the battles of the land
Had stol'n, too, into my soul
And wov'n their bitter glories through the strand
Of fairy lore and dole
Whereof much elfin-song from region starrier
Had been the carrier.

I can recall but this –
Our coach paused once beside a village-fair
Where, mid its glare and hiss
Disturbing twilight, decked with streamers rare,
A merry-go-round made blare,
Roaring 'The Standard on the Braes o' Mar
Is up and streaming rarely!'
But by what dream-fed alchemy afar
It hath smote me late and early
All my days thence, in forlorn, mute despair
I am baffled to declare.

Wild, eldritch deeds and dark,
With poignant, futile valour poured in vain
That I knew not then to mark,

Were intermingled as the sea with rain
In my small, childish brain
And founded all my fancy's atmosphere:
So that, wherever I go,
With something not remote from nameless fear
Hint of that musick I know
Sounding, sounding, sounding again and again,
But never quite plain.

Often it calls me forth
To seek its fullness in strange random places
Farther and farther North:
It sets me following it in unknown sad faces
Lit suddenly by graces
That seem to have caught some memory akin to mine;
But never have I found
The mingled ecstasy and woe divine
Wed in that sight and sound
That still the corridors of my being haunts and paces,
Leaving faint traces.

It may too far be fled
For any mood to recapture, or perchance
Too much gone hence with the dead
Who twined their life about the circumstance
That made for me Romance.
My music is too faltering to regain its
Lovely, impalpable, dim
Masterfulness of mystery, or explain its
Lamentable, dolorous, grim
Burden of battle heroic and goblin-dance
Weird in its elegance.

But I know I shall seek it to the end
And I never can go in a train through an unknown tract
But I gaze through my dreams and rend
The sights that I see, the sounds that I hear, distract
For the elusive, ultimate fact
That the merry-go-round seemed to shout in my far
Lost boyhood's ear – to see
The Standard bloodily stream on the Braes o' Mar
Wed to the wizardry
Of that compact
Which all my life I looked for, longed for, lacked.

'I REMEMBER – '
A READERS' SYMPOSIUM

The Poem that Influenced Me? . . . Last year we invited our readers to contribute to a series in which contemporary poets of distinction recalled the first poem that had a predominant influence on them: and here, at last, is a selection of their little essays, which may now be added to those of A. E. Coppard, Richard Church, Sir Herbert Read, V. Sackville West, Herbert Palmer, John Redwood Anderson, L. A. G. Strong, Phoebe Hesketh, Kenneth Hare, and F. L. Lucas.

The reason for our delay in making a choice of entries is that those which readers submitted were so interesting (whether the remembered poem made them want to be poets or not) and so charming that we were reluctant to fix a closing date. The response to our invitation, indeed, was so wholehearted that a further selection will appear in our next number.

A HAPPY BEGINNING

I composed verses as a child because I imagined everyone did, just as they knew how to sew or cook. All my family wrote, discussed and read poetry so that before I could read I knew many poems by heart, including much of *The Ancient Mariner*. At ten I was given a blank book entitled – hand printed – 'Poems by Carla Lanyon Lanyon' and an Oxford Book of English Verse. I scribbled in both, dots for a favourite poem in the last-named volume, surrounded by rings of appreciation. All Keats' poems have three rings, the *Ode to a Nightingale* four. Away from home during an illness I was confined in a room whose bookshelf contained three Venetian glasses, *Adam Bede* and Keats's poems. From frequent reference I came to know the index of his first lines by heart. What beautiful nonsense verse for a child! –

> No more advices, no more cautioning . . .
> No, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist.

CARLA LANYON LANYON.

TENNYSON SAID IT ALL

Early one morning in the summer of 1920 I walked singing along a country lane in Worcestershire. Every dew-drenched field was a smooth-swarded bower where the crocus broke like fire; my eyes were full of tears, my heart of love, my heart was breaking and my eyes were dim – dim with the sorrow of a soul dissolved in tears. All the beauty and all the sadness of life weighed heavily upon my ten-year-old shoulders. The previous day I had discovered 'Oenone' in a book that

had been used to prop up the leg of a rickety table in the parlour. I knew then that I should never rest until I had put my heart into verse, but thirty-four years later I still find that Tennyson has left me nothing to say. F. G. Lott.

PIPPA'S SONG

I have no difficulty in remembering the first poem that greatly influenced me – about the age of thirteen, after a prelude of stimulation and imitation caused by the *Lays of Ancient Rome* and *Hiawatha*. It was Pippa's song. I can still feel the sensation of delight and confident wonder that Browning's lyric aroused in me. I tried to draw it, I tried to sing it to adopted tunes, and when I found myself alone on anything resembling a hillside, dew-pearled or dry, I tried to dance it.

I did not imitate it, but I gave up my attempts at verse-histories, and began to try to write about the simple, natural things that really moved me. Gwladys M. Hawksley.

A BROTHER'S TRIBUTE

The first poem that really inspired me to verse was by my sister, Jeanine Kendall, an advanced bard by the age of twelve and the accepted poet of the family. (Now a poet and translator in New York, a member of this Society, and active in the P.S.A.) A moving Ode, "The Ocean", may not permanently have influenced my style or subject-matter, but undoubtedly started me off on the road paved with *abbacdcd* and, for Jeanine, a fine paling of asterisks. There followed a long pause after which this little pig's taste in truffles (to use F. L. Lucas's charming phrase) tended towards themes of Memory and Time and, though my range of reading is wider now and I enjoy many different poets' work, for deepest delight and emotion, I still turn to my early favourites: Blunden's "Chances of Remembrance", Moulton's "The Last Goodbye", most of de la Mare, and Wordsworth's "Intimations". As Art became my primary love, there was a brief but intense immersion in the painter-poets – Morris, Rossetti, Blake – but the balance swung back again to those most in harmony with my own thoughts "that do often lie too deep for tears". A. R. Kendall.

I DISCOVERED WHITMAN

I received no encouragement to read poetry at home. During my early schooldays, being quite incapable of memorizing verse, a punishable failure, I bore all poetry an unremitting grudge. Then, after leaving school, I discovered Walt Whitman. I was overwhelmed. Here, just round the corner, was to be found the answers to all the problems of the Universe, and the purpose of man! Here was practical

proof that secrets, untellable in prose, could be revealed in poetry. 'The words of my book nothing, the drift everything.'

Impossible of attainment as Walt Whitman's magnificent claims were, his assertion that 'no poem or the least part of a poem but has reference to the soul' seemed demonstrably true. But my continuing though unsuccessful desire to express myself through the medium of poetry came to me one night in the trenches of the first Great War when I read that most tender of all Walt Whitman's poems, *Reconciliation.*

C. E. HUDSON.

EDITORIAL NOTE. – The poem by Whitman, referred to in Mr. Hudson's contribution, may be difficult for some readers to refer to. It is short enough for us to reproduce it here:

RECONCILIATION

Word over all, beautiful as the sky,
Beautiful that war and all its deeds of carnage must in time be utterly lost,
That the hands of the sisters Death and Night incessantly softly wash again, and ever again, this soil'd world;
For my enemy is dead, a man as divine as myself is dead,
I look where he lies white-faced and still in the coffin – I draw near,
Bend down and touch lightly with my lips the white face in the coffin.

RESPONSIBILITY

GORDON P. WALLACE

Every man-jack is on trial for his life,
For the sins of the pack and its ding-dong strife:
The bruises on the donkey;
Music in the wrong key;
Who's to blame?
Me.

Each man's soul is his own to possess;
Each man's sins are his own to confess:
The sobs and tears of Mrs. Jones;
Her children's bent and ricketty bones;
Who's to blame?
Jones.

Old man Jones is on trial for his life,
For the sins of the pack and its ding-dong strife:
The misery and the shame;
Jones is to blame.
Who's Jones?
You.

GREEN GIRL OF SICKLY SPRING

ELISABETH AYRTON

Enhanced behind her glass,
Entranced within her bubble,
The princess unsleeping,
Sick with sadness, waits.

Caught in a membrane mist,
Miasma of spoilt love,
Green girl of sickly spring –
No heat of sun gets through
And all the seasons wait:
Wait for the sun to pierce
The creamy, curdled corn,
Dry out the milky grain
And make the hard, sharp green
Of little plums and peaches swell again
In red and gold and purple.
Let the princess out,
Encased, incarcerated from the sun,
Delaying the procession of the year.

There is no man not man enough to free
Her from withholding sadness.
Fool, knave or loon,
Beggar or prince, all have
The warm, protecting hand,
Human, directing hand,
Clasping, desiring hand,
Which breaks at once the glass;
Which bursts the bubble;
Sets free the green princess
To burgeon in full sun.

LET US NOT CALL—

EDGAR PROUDMAN

Let us not call the modern artists fools
Because they do not always keep the rules;
'Art conceals art', for instance, never applied
To those who haven't anything to hide.

DUFFERS

KATHLEEN V. RICHARDSON

He is so well meaning, the duffer,
The dear awkward poppet,
But steer him from bric-a-brac – nary a bric
Or the silly will drop it:
A duffer has not enough fingers
And too many feet
And his rather nice eyes are shortsighted a bit,
The poor sweet.

Young duffers muff catches, bust windows
And bungle their sums;
Older ones spill things on people or down
Their own vast sloping tums.
She-duffers have shattering dreams about
Glittering gala affairs
Where they are the best dressed, the wittiest –
That's where they slip on the stairs
And all the grand persons behind them
So graciously climbing
Are mown down like skittles through one
Dufferess's mistiming.

They may be bucolic, they may be
Anaemic and arty,
But never by any chance are they
The life and the soul of the party,
And this is a shame, for the duffer's
A sensitive soul
Who's anxious to shine and be helpful but suffers
From weak locomotor control.
There's hardly a duffer but comes over
Silent and sad
At the thought of the wonderful time
That he just hasn't had.
Nothing a duffer does springs from
A malice aforethought;
If any one ought to know that –
Well, I dare say that I ought.

EPIGRAMS

PAUL SELVER

ONE OF THE IMMORTALS

His books are great, but sad to tell,
They are unreadable as well.

ON A CERTAIN POET

His musings, hitched to jelly-fish rhythms, can either
Be prose or verse, or else, and mostly, neither.

THE HIGHBROW

His intellect pulsates with might and main,
Handicapped only by an addled brain.

VERSATILITY

This critic writes on all things. Grim and tense,
He treats the lot with equal lack of sense.

ON A CERTAIN OBSCURE POET

What do his verses mean? The pundits have failed to agree.
For some reply: 'Fiddle-de-dum' and others: 'Fiddle-de-dee'.

ON THE MASTERPIECE OF A FAMOUS NOVELIST

None before him, with fiction as his medium,
Achieves such greatness, artistry and tedium.

EPITAPH

Here lies a statesman, thus remaining true
To what in life he always best could do.

DID HE ONCE SEE DYLAN PLAIN?

MALCOLM H. TATTERSALL

Was he the friend of someone in the "Yard",
Or his wife's uncle on the B.B.C.,
That editors who hailed him as a bard
Published his tripe and called it poetry?

How did the scruple of his wit contrive
From hireling critics such a dram of fuss?
– Say, did he once see Dylan plain? Or give
His seat to Edith Sitwell in a 'bus?

SECOND SIGHT

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

If I were asked which aspect of the art of poetry has most appeal to me I would answer that it is the gift it brings of second sight. By this I mean the quality of revelation behind the immediacies and apparencies of living and the seeming logic of events. It may be retorted, though, that prose-writers also penetrate beneath the surface and take us into the hearts and minds, the hopes and fears of our fellows, exploring motive and aspiration. But in their explorations prose-writers are limited by the attributes of prose, for if in prose the trend of circumstances overleaps possibility, or denies the innate logic of our own mental processes, there is a sense of incompleteness, however much it may be veiled by style or emotion.

It is by symbol, image and metaphor that a poet carries conviction – conviction not to the mind but the intuitive processes of the imagination that transcend precise sequences, argument and conclusion that the intellect demands.

Beauty, love, loyalty and faith – everything profound and fundamental defies intellectual analysis. On the other hand, poetry has not only the resources of symbolism and imagery and the magic of language with its subtle overtones; it has the power also to attune itself to the infinite rhythms of the universe and of humanity. It is no accident that poetry is affected by the wear and tear of an ever-increasingly mechanized world, for the poet needs to stand aside from noise and hurly-burly to listen, and to match the pulsation of his heart with time and tide. Not to detach himself, though, as in an ivory tower, only concerned with his own malaise; not to probe and resolve his own dilemma with a private symbolism for his own understanding of his condition. He stands aside while close to the centre, as an observer and then as a visionary, communicating with symbols and images, possessing a universal key that shall open to new paths of vision and understanding.

To be in touch with his moods and to follow him where he may direct we must also pursue a similar detachment and devotion, for his art is one of communication equally as that of perception. Poetry can never be less profound than the truths it attempts to translate. It conveys, like Nature itself, an initial impression on first acquaintance yet yields ever widening vistas as our inner vision awakes and responds. It is because of this that I sometimes feel I know why the blind, in their isolation and darkness, turn for refreshment and new sight to the medium of great poetry; how so many, in their travail towards tranquility, find unguessed landscapes both in their own reading and

in their listening. Perhaps from them we others may learn, in our own approach to poetry, that most is to be gained by a complete surrender through which the uplands of the spirit may be surveyed and its harmonies heard.

SIGHT

All sight is relative –
I have known blind who saw
As though an incandescent light
Illumined every cranny of the path
The soul must tread.
I have known sighted folk
Who could not see
Though sun and shadow etched
In silhouette
Each mould and motion of their crowded day.
All sight is relative –
The absolute is tempered by
A haze of joy, a film of pain,
Or finds its range
The pliant focus of the searching will.
Yet there is an equilibrium of soul and sense
Like to the sudden clarity
Fresh waters yield when winds are still
And eddies cease to fret.
All sight is relative –
I have known blind who saw
And sighted folk who could not see.

*

TO AN ORCHID

M. W. EASTWELL

Mothlike moons of the tired-eyed dark,
Beacons in the night of evergreen verbosity
Weaving on the wash of the firefly's flight
Down emerald glooms.
Colour cupped in the green-fingered night,
Amid the run-down clock of the mangrove swamp
And the fever-haunts of all that is I.
Healing mother-touch that gives eyes
To the blindness of thought and washes my wounds
In the shattered gourd of this sycamore world.

POETRY AND BACKGROUND

STEPHEN GRAHAM

Ballads of a Bogman, by Sigerson Clifford (Macmillan, 8s. 6d.)
Edwin Arlington Robinson, by E. S. Fussell (University of California Press and Cambridge University Press, 26s.)
Poet and Painter: Correspondence between Gordon Bottomley and Paul Nash, 1910-1946, edited by Claude Colleer Abbott and Anthony Bertram (Oxford University Press, 30s.)

The background of Sigerson Clifford is the county of Kerry and he sits on his stool in a Dublin office and dreams all the while of his homeland:

> I am Kerry like my mother before me,
> And my mother's mother and her man.
> Now I sit on an office stool remembering,
> And the memory of them like a fan
> Soothes the embers into flame.
> I am Kerry and proud of my name.
>
> My heart is looped around the rutted hills
> That shoulder the stars out of the sky,
> And about the wasp-yellow fields
> And the strands where the kelp-streamers lie;
> Where, soft as lovers' Gaelic the rain falls,
> Sweeping into the silver the lacy mountain walls.

These are the first two verses of a lovely poem by a new voice from Ireland, a first volume of a young man's poetry and worth reading and possessing. It is largely of old men's tales told in country pubs and of tinkers and vagabonds 'of whom the world was not worthy', bringing us the west country. Kerry speaks.

I have written first of Sigerson Clifford's *Ballads of a Bogman* because poetry itself should have precedence over books written about poetry. In these days we have much more interpretation of poetry than we have of poetry itself. These interpretations do not inspire new poets but they have their value inasmuch as they provide talking points, provoke curiosity concerning certain poets and cause some people to turn to neglected books and read poetry afresh.

Edwin Arlington Robinson was called 'the foremost poet in America' but chiefly by those who wished to preserve the New England tradition with its artistry and severity challenged by the new voices from the Middle West, Masters, Lindsay and Sandburg. Chicago speaking for America instead of Boston; that was something which could not be tolerated. Robinson's background was New England and a well-lined library. Not for him to write –

> Ho for Kansas land that restores us
> When houses choke us and great books bore us

or

> Hog Butcher for the world,
> Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,

Player with Railroads and the Nation's Freight Handler
Stormy, husky, brawling,
City of the Big Shoulders.

Robinson once stayed with Emerson, and in his early years defined the mission of the poet as getting at the eternal strength of things and fearlessly making strong songs about it. But to be original to that extent was to invite sterility, and he soon discovered that his own mission was to continue writing where other poets had left off. His background is predominantly one of books rather than of scenes or of life itself. His verse abounds in verbal echoes and literary influences are evident throughout. Carlyle speaks, Emerson speaks, Longfellow suggests, an imagined Keats whispers in his ear, Tennyson sometimes shows him the way, and upon occasion he could use Coleridge as a model.

From this volume about his literary background one might conclude that Edwin Arlington Robinson was far from being original, but that would be erroneous. It is quite legitimate to have a background of culture: many great poets have. Mr. Fussell's book is valuable, throwing light on the life and work of an outstanding poet whose reputation has, however, been slowly fading since he died.

The third book, *Poet and Painter,* relates to a lesser poet, Gordon Bottomley, and his correspondence with the artist Paul Nash. The volume is a big collection of letters extending through an age, from 1910 to 1946, and is extremely interesting. Again we are considering background. The poet believed that he drew his whole inspiration from Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelites, and strove to keep the young artist convinced that these had spoken the last word in the direction of Art. Paul Nash liked Bottomley's poetry:

> The almost intoxicating richness of words and the unusual imagery produce a strange haunting feeling in me. I confess my mouth gets too full of doubled words. I enjoy the impression rather than the music or the meaning. But the colour of some! Oh my word, it's like Rossetti's painting.

That was written in 1911. Bottomley remained with Rossetti, but Paul Nash eventually had to break away from the pure, the mystical and the romantic. The poet was on a bed of lingering illness but the artist was free to wander, study and absorb new ideas. Bottomley told him it would not be of the least use going to Paris to study Art where 'the impostors learn a highly organized series of tricks'. But Paul Nash ultimately accepted the modern French, although he remained the faithful admirer of his old friend.

Gordon Bottomley survived into an age that preferred realism to mysticism for its self-expression. The mystic love of detail gave place to the love of detail for the sake of detail, and this is very interestingly noted in one of the letters. What may be called the Rossetti school in literature was a dead end, made rather absurd in William Morris's romances and ineffective in Hewlitt's novels. It had a tinge of 'Ye Olde'. Still Pre-Raphaelitism in its day was wonderful, and had as its unique background the love of God, the wonder at the incredible loveliness of Creation.

*

FOR AUTHORS ONLY

Members who are Authors, we mean . . . Turn back to Page 135 for something to your advantage.

FROM GIMCRACK TO GENUINE

GEOFFREY JOHNSON

Autumn Sequel, by Louis MacNeice (Faber, 12s. 6d.)
Collected Poems, by Stephen Spender (Faber, 15s.)
From a Western Hilltop, by Stanton A. Coblentz (Wings Press, California, 2 dollars)

Most of the first of these three books is pseudo-intellectualism in *bouts rimés.* It is a bewildering profusion of amazing knowledge, ingenuity and cynical wit without a heart. It also professes to be in terza rima, the measure of Dante, and, except for Shelley's couplet at the close of each strophe, the measure of his 'Ode to the West Wind'. A mere dozen lines of the *Paradiso,* or even of Shelley, whom the fashionably hard-boiled are pleased to call the adolescent, are a comparison devastating enough. The author is nothing if not up to date, superficially that is; substantially, this world-weary Byronism of his was dead and done with even in 1855; he is very clever indeed, but not clever enough by quite a century. Incidentally, almost any canto of 'Don Juan' beats this acrobatic stuff hollow. The author's trouble seems to be, as he so memorably puts it:

> Goodwill towards men my foot! I hate their guts.

The second volume, with some noble and luminous exceptions, consists of precious, often unintelligible and wholly humourless self-analysis. If we need an explanation why contemporary poetry appeals far less than it appealed in the past, the explanation is here: the subject, the introverted self, is all wrong. Further, though capable of fine harmonies, e.g., 'I Think Continually' and 'The Express', a great promise that has, alas, remained largely unfulfilled, the poet flounders all over the place with his metrics. He seems to write almost always with the greatest difficulty; the natural poet in him is as intermittent as the fumblings are frequent. And since he himself assures us that he has 'spent several months reconsidering and even re-experiencing poems . . . written over the past twenty-five years', we must assume of his syntactical and other crudities that he knows no better:

> Marston, dropping it in the grate, broke his pipe . . .

The pronoun 'it' first and the noun 'pipe' second, instead of the other way round, is a breach of the most elementary decency in style, even in the prose of a fourth-former. Much, however, must be, and is, forgiven an author, who, though a hyper-sensitive rather than a creator, has his face set towards the light and not the darkness, and whose pity for men is much too profound for him ever to be cheap and cynical.

At last, Stanton Coblentz, some of whose sonnets have already appeared in *The Poetry Review.* Here we have a poet who is on the right path, a singer not of his personal disgusts, not even of his suffering self, but of mankind. Here we have Nature and the heart of man, the storm and the serenity of the peak, the sorrows and the comforts of the valley, the prison, the slum, the hydrogen bomb, the whole complicated meshwork of civilization sung by one who has experienced much and meditated more.

Moreover, there is nothing about him of the common and specious plea that because modern society is confused and often unintelligible the poet of necessity must be confused and unintelligible in his art also; on the contrary he has spent all the more pains in seeking for such complex thoughts, feelings and experiences unforgettable and revealing form. A fearless fighter in his many prose-writings for clarity and sincerity and for the abolition of intellectual humbug in modern poetry, he quietly reminds us here by personal example of what poetry long was, still is in unsuspected places, and yet could be.

EZRA POUND, SCHOLAR-POET

JOHN GRADDON

ezra pound's mauberley by John J. Espey (faber & faber, 15s.)
The Classic Anthology defined by Confucius, by Ezra Pound (Faber & Faber, 30s.)

During the last few years faber & Faber (don't blame me for the capital confusion) have done Ezra Pound proud, and rightly so for a number of reasons. Not least of them is that, were it not for their efforts, he would be regarded to-day as no more than a period literary eruption and would have to await the next generation for canonisation.

Pound's Hugh Selwyn Mauberley, first printed in 1920, is the attitude of a man to his age – or, perhaps more properly, a man's condemnation of his age with bitterness, satire, and with a queer absence of passion.

The degree of his personal identification matters little. The opening ode and lines reflect the frustration that encompassed him:

E.P. Ode Pour L'election de son sepulture.

> For three years, out of key with his time,
> He strove to resuscitate the dead art
> Of poetry;

and, following this ode:

> The age demanded an image
> Of its accelerated grimace,
> Something for the modern stage,
> Not, at any rate, an Attic grace;
>
> Not, not certainly, the obscure reveries
> Of the inward gaze;
> Better mendacities
> Than the classics in paraphrase!

For those who do not care for the literary detective work that graces so much American scholarship these days, the full text of *mauberley* is fortunately reprinted in the latter part of this volume.

There is one line in the ode that aptly describes the translation: 'He fished by obstinate isles'. The difficulties inherent in this work needed a self confidence that few possess. It was, however, a task overwhelmingly worthwhile; and Pound fortunately had the scholarship as well as the assurance.

These odes – 305 of them – are really ballads, and were meant to be sung. Confucius sang them to his lute – 'barring cogent reasons a scholar is never without his lute' – and, as Kung said: 'Without character you will be unable to play on that instrument or to execute the music fit for the Odes'.

What a pity the occasional now-forgotten colloquialism. When a period-exclamation fails to get absorbed into the language its use spoils, quite disproportionately, the passage wherefrom it juts like an ante-diluvian rock.

COLLECTIONS OF VIRILITY

KATHLEEN VALMAI RICHARDSON

Dark Landscape, by Madge Hales (Chatto & Windus, 6s.)
The Peaceable Kingdom, by Jon Silkin (Chatto & Windus, 6s.)
Riding Lights, by Norman MacCaig (The Hogarth Press, 7s. 6d.)
Selected Lyrical Poems, Wallace Nicholls (Worden, Marazion, 5s.)

Emotion does not really matter very much; passion does, because it fathers authentic poetry. Most of our poets to-day are afraid of emotion and are put to strange shifts to avoid it. Sometimes, this experimentation degenerates into carefulness, and carefulness fathers little save Care; worry about appearing second-rate without a gimmick to attract attention. Thus, tranquillity too is lacking.

But sometimes, when the fire is hot, this pushing against emotion does produce passion. Madge Hales's tiger scorches the tender landscape:

> And close to him, the gentle wood
> Is full of tears as maiden's eyes
> But the trees are mute to tell his tale
> And try to hush his savage cries.

There it is, dangerously near the edge, but veritable – and thank heaven for it. But what on earth has Rachel got to do with 'dense-sweet', sweet-full', 'numinous' and whatnot? Those dear old fogies who somehow managed to transcribe the Old Testament into deathless English had never heard of hyphens; these are the prerogative of the Revisers.

Read 'Cacti' though, and learn from a good poem what makes a careful poet. Or paraphrase 'Happiness' as Poetry:

> (Poetry) comes by stealth, by night,
> Not by known ways
> Or compelling light.
>
> It arrives unannounced, unsought,
> On the very breath
> That never gave it thought.

There are one or two such lyrics in *Dark Landscape* as good as any that have appeared lately, but others bow ignominiously to fashion. Tigers, even shabby ones, seldom bow.

In order to be objective, Jon Silkin uses animals to bear the love and pity he fears to offer mankind directly. In 'First it was Singing' ('I and the hunted

fox') the stoned outcast cries out. The struggle from below, the passion to free the slave – these are ancient urges and have often created true poetry because, being racial, they transcend the singer's individual emotions. When Silkin cannot avoid the personal and direct, as in 'Death of a Son' – utterly without flamboyance and grey as sorrow itself – he is very moving. There is a curious, perhaps self-imposed restriction about most of these poems which on reflection seems to be connected with colour. The impression left is black and white with occasional splashes of red. A series of woodcuts perhaps, but vivid for all that.

In *Riding Lights,* Norman MacCaig stalks the world with a metaphysical realism that is intensely individual. The Thing has being because he perceives it and this perception grows from the core; he is the pip in the apple, as it were. The results are intriguing. It is as though the pathetic fallacy, poor drooping dummy, suddenly and robustly thumbed its nose at us. This metamorphical turn of thought, far from being dull or over-intellectual, inspires tremendous vitality in the verse, which is well wrought and clearly worded. There are flashes that indicate Mr MacCaig even finds metaphysics fun – the smile on the face of the tiger. The passion is there too, the controlled technique serving it without salivation.

This is the best kind of contemporary verse and it is pleasantly surprising to find that the volume has been awarded an Arts Council prize. It is also recommended by the Poetry Book Society. The quality is so even that I hesitate to single out any poem; however, 'Birds All Singing' and 'Empty Pool' took my fancy especially.

Wallace Nicholls's work is more picturesque than that of the other three; more declamatory and dramatic. In other words, there is more emotion. But it is adult verse with some felicitous phrasing – apart from the second person oracular. One senses good reading-aloud possibilities in such poems as 'Corsairs' and 'Sea Music'; and 'My Father' and 'My Mother' have an angry sadness which stirs the heart as poetry should.

THE GENTLE ART OF PARODY

F. PRATT GREEN

Sincere Flattery, by G. H. Vallins (Epworth Press, 7s. 6d.)

A good parody is an act of criticism. It is never mere imitation; it exposes the nature of an art by re-creating it. Perhaps the best recent examples are to be found in Cecil Day Lewis's *An Italian Visit.* This distinction between the lower and higher forms of parody is well expounded in the useful Note with which Mr. Vallins prefaces his own examples.

And what sort of parodist is Mr. Vallins himself? His title gives us a clue. His is a gentle art; he teases but does not wound. But although he rarely gets to the quick of it, he gives his readers plenty of amusement as he 'takes off' a score of poets from Chaucer to T. S. Eliot. He is most successful with Chaucer and the elder poets. As for the moderns, he only tackles Eliot, and half-heartedly; perhaps he doesn't love them enough to flatter them.

This enjoyable book would make an acceptable present to a literary-minded friend recovering from an operation. He would laugh but not so explosively as to damage himself.

SEARCH AND RESEARCH

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

The Manuscript Poems of A. E. Housman, edited by Tom Burns Haber (University of Minnesota: Geoffrey Cumberlege, 25s.)

The Rural Muse, by Rayner Unwin (Allen and Unwin, 15s.)

Introductory Papers on Dante, by Dorothy Sayers (Methuen, 21s.)

Much valuable detective work is being done in the American Universities among the treasure-chests of English literature hitherto overlooked. But the publication of A. E. Housman's manuscript poems raises a red light of warning: enthusiasm is not enough. The poet bequeathed his notebooks and manuscripts to his brother but permitted him to publish only those poems which appeared to Laurence Housman to be complete and not inferior in quality. Mr. Housman published some of them after destroying many pages and erasing other entries. Then he pasted the remaining pages in such a way that only the manuscripts of published and worthy poems were to be seen. The notebooks were sold to an American lady who presented them to the Library of Congress. Now, legal proscription withdrawn and with the permission of the librarian, Mr. Haber, who is a research scholar, has, aided by modern photographic technique, assiduously uncovered the discarded, erased or pasted-up work in all its incomplete nakedness. Abandoned lines, stanzas and halting fragments lie like shavings of wood on a carpenter's deserted bench.

To what end? All poets know the stress and tears of preparation even when the original draft is spontaneous. Nothing that could add to the nostalgic and autumn perfection of Housman's definitive work has been brought to light. His brother needs sympathy for not including a prohibitive clause when selling the notebooks.

Rayner Unwin has postulated a peasant tradition in English poetry that others may find difficult to identify. By including authentic farm-labourers like Clare, Duck, and Bloomfield with educated countrymen who were hardly peasants, such as Thomson, Crabbe and Barnes, and adding for good measure the Swindon railway worker, Alfred Williams, the author has made an appealing book that revives much humble, yet lovely, untrammelled verse. It is pleasant to meet again the established felicities, but how many of us know as we should the music of Williams, who died in 1930 and who, during his earnest but struggling lifetime, was encouraged and sponsored into publication by Galloway Kyle?

Dorothy L. Sayers's translation of *The Divine Comedy* is well known and applauded. Not so known, however, are her researches into the tradition that preceded it. In the ordinary way I would not recommend a guide to a poem, however great or long, but Dante's masterpiece is a complex allegory with four levels of meaning; the literal, the political, the moral and the mystical.

THE LONG AND SHORT OF IT

F. PRATT GREEN

Cephalus and Procris, by Eric George (Harvill Press, 12s. 6d.)

Twentieth Century Narrative Poems, edited by M. Wollman (Harrap, 5s. 6d.)

Australian Poetry, 1954, selected by Ronald McCuaig (Angus & Robertson, 10s. 6d.)

English literature is rich in both lyrical and narrative poetry. That so many poets – Milton, Browning, Hardy come to mind – should have shown an equal mastery is surprising, for different qualities are needed: concentration, immediacy, sense of form, in lyrical poetry; power to develop a theme and to sustain inspiration in narrative, particularly epic, poetry. Narrative poetry, in fact, calls for gifts which are not poetic at all, which explains why so few narrative poems reach a high enough level of achievement to secure for them an enduring place in literature and why so many dismally fail.

Cephalus and Procris is a narrative poem, of almost epic proportions, interspersed with lyrics. Eric George has made his task more difficult by retaining Greek names in his modern version of a Greek legend, thus destroying the realism of his story, and by mixing a deliberate flatness of language with the high-flown and poetical. We are thus prevented from enjoying the narration, which is often skilful, and the descriptive and lyrical passages, which are often pleasing, by embarrassing incongruities. Such a subject, if it is to be treated in this way, needs a light touch, or the kind of poetic sensibility E. B. Browning brought to 'Aurora Leigh', or the very different sensibility with which a Robert Frost handles vernacular narration.

How to do it is diversely illustrated in Maurice Wollman's admirable anthology. Here we can compare and contrast the rhetoric of G. K. Chesterton, the cool statement of Edwin Muir, the effective roughness of Hardy, the near-to-slickness of Cecil Day Lewis, the evocative humour of John Betjeman, the delicate sobriety of Gordon Bottomley, whose 'The End of the World' is a brave choice; and here is Robert Frost himself showing us what a great poet can do with common speech. *Twentieth Century Narrative Poems,* with its full explanatory notes, will strongly appeal to teachers of English and please every sort of reader.

Australian Poetry, 1954, in which lyrical and narrative poems are more nicely balanced than in most anthologies, more than maintains the standard set by its predecessors. The old hands are in excellent form; newer talent makes a welcome appearance. I particularly liked Vivian Smith's 'Old Men are Facts', Harley Matthews' 'In the Swamp Now', and John Blight's 'Death of a Whale'. Ian Healy's 'Love Song' wrung my hardened heart, as only a perfect lyric can. Australian poetry, it seems, has more heart in it, which makes for our enjoyment.

'SING THEN I MUST UNTIL MY SONG BE HEARD'

NOTES BY THE EDITORIAL STAFF

(The inclusion of a new work in these notes does not preclude a subsequent review.)

Several of the newest books will have an uncommon interest for readers of *The Poetry Review*. One has been mentioned already in this number – Geoffrey Johnson's collection of poems, *The Magic Stone* (Hale, 7s. 6d.), and another that has been published too near to our Press-day for the reviewer is *Over the Bridge* by Richard Church (Heinemann, 18s.). It may be described loosely as autobiography, in which, to quote the publishers, 'the distinguished English poet, novelist, and critic crosses over the bridge of the years to record his childhood at the turn of the century.' The book ends when he is seventeen. He had found himself. 'Suddenly I was armed. Poetry was to be my weapon.'

Two books with a certain significance which are also to be reviewed in our next issue are *The Metamorphoses of Ovid*, an English version by A. E. Watts, with the etchings of Pablo Picasso (Cambridge University Press, 37s. 6d.), and *Lysistrata*, by Aristophanes, translated by Dudley Fitts (Faber, 12s. 6d.). William Plomer's *A Shot in the Park* (Cape, 7s. 6d.), prompts the question why do contemporary poets so often use a smartish title, playing on words, for a serious work of art? This is a collection of ballads, intended to be read aloud.

A translation of *77 Poems* by Alberto de Lacerda, for which Arthur Waley and the author himself are responsible, comes from Allen and Unwin (9s. 6d.). Roy Campbell considers de Lacerda the best Portuguese poet of his generation, and the following short piece, entitled 'Half Way,' is an example of his emotional intensity:

> I stay between heaven and earth.
> Only within do I weep.
> I am like the naked tree
> That points on high its boughs:
> Raises its wings, yet does not fly,
> His roots, yet does not go down.

Such an economy of words is not at all characteristic of other poets whose writings are before us. But Alan Smithers includes in *Flaming Arras* (Fortune Press, 6s.) a 'sonnet' with two final lines which might almost stand alone as a pronouncement not necessarily on the poet to whom he does homage, but to any poet of stature and influence:

> An age without a faith was tamed: and heard
> Beyond the music of your words, the Word.

The prevailing mood of *Flaming Arras* is thoughtful and observant, devoid of facile lyricism. So is that of *Pedasus*, by Professor C. A. Trypanis, which has been printed as a limited edition (5s.) in the University of Reading School of Art. The inspiration is classical, and a four-line poem 'Delphi' may be quoted, though not necessarily representative:

> 'Go, tell the King the sculptured shrine
> Lies on the ground. The Pythian god
> No longer has a hut!' Rose-shod
> The dawn treads where the thorns entwine.

Patrick Kirtlan's collection, *Pan's Music* (Fortune Press, 6s.), is at the other extreme – timeless, warmly human, and usually so technically impeccable that the author can afford to be challenged at the very beginning of the volume:

in the first and third lines he attempts to rhyme *morn* and *dawn*. But the poem itself, 'My Mother', gives him a moving send-off all the same. *Time and other Poems,* by Robert Cecil (Putnam, 3s. 6d.) is another well-produced book from which we are able to choose for praise another nearly faultless poem, 'Walled Garden', beautiful for its emotion and picturesqueness. Agnes Carlyon, in *Songs and Sonnets* (St. Michael's Abbey Press, Farnborough, no price stated) is a devout writer with similar qualities. The dedication suggests her single-minded attitude: 'To Mary, Mother of God . . . ' Eleven examples of Patrick James's verse, *One Aspect,* are presented by Stockwell (1s. 6d.), who also publishes *Time and Tide,* by Paul Lehmann (2s.), *Flame of Death,* by Robert L. Peters (2s.), *Conflicting Conflicts,* by A. H. Green (1s. 6d.), *Poems,* by B.U.K. (1s. 6d.), and William Irving Wood's *Mountain of Beauty* (2s. 6d.). 'Each poem well written is an experience, a lesson both for the author and the reader.' So writes the poet of the last-named book in a foreword, and his verses are not only well written but a vivid outcome of experience 'dedicated to all Service and Ex-Service personnel of World War II.' *The Long Wood,* by Margaret Anne Leake, is privately printed (Wessex Press, 1s. 6d.). The author's rather enviable outlook is conveyed in such lines as 'There is no peace of human mind like peace of sunset over clouded hills.' *Calendar Days and other Poems* is a translated collection of Todja Tartschoff's verse by Leopold Sirombo (Newman and Harris, 3s.). James Kirkup was part-translator of a work by the same author, whose heart belongs mainly to a dream-life. 'Only in dreams will you be happy.' . . . 'Man cannot live without his dreams.'

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Tributes by reviewers William Kean Seymour and Alun Llewellyn to the poetry of A. E. Dodd are printed on the dust-cover of *Poems from Belmont,* which the Fortune Press have published (7s. 6d.). Belmont, we are informed, lies in North Staffordshire, not in Italy, and indeed the whole book is essentially English, not only in spirit but in technique, which is remarkably mature. 'A Child Asked Me to Take Her Across a Busy Street' and 'First Impressions of the English Lakes' are short pieces that any poet might be proud of. Mr. Dodd's greatest pride is in his longer pieces, especially 'The Stranger at Belmont.' Paul Casimir's slender book *In the Beginning* (Zebra Poets, 1s.), is lovingly done, and so is *The Courtly Season,* by Richard Easton, same publishers, same price. *Hell,* by Frank Townsend, is a tremendous indictment of our present-day civilization. It is described by the publishers (Halcyon Press, 7s. 6d.) as a 'poetic mosaic' of disturbing evidence. *The Talisman* and *Four Holy Sonnets* by Frederic Vanson, are miniature broadsheets, issued by Gemini Publications, Spondon, Derby (4d. and 3d. respectively). James Urquhart has made a delightful contribution to Scottish verse with *The Yellow Door* (Maclellan, 7s. 6d.). His native town is Dumfries, and this may explain why he is a Burns-spirited poet. All the same, would his anti-Russian sentiments have been approved by the immortal forerunner who saw through political trickery and humbug clearly and piercingly? Joe Corrie, in *Scottish Pride and other Poems* (Galloway Gazette, 2s. 6d.) would give the answer.

The lives of two great writers are included in two popular series – *John Bunyan,* by Roger Sharrock (Hutchinson's Universal Library, 8s. 6d.) and

CAN WE HELP YOU?

The answer is Yes to any Member who is anxious for the best advice about his or her work. The Poetry Society established a CRITICAL SERVICE some years ago, under the supervision of Miss E. D. BANGAY, and writers are invited to make use of it.

Two poems may be submitted for criticism and help, for a minimum fee of 5s. The Charge for the criticism of each additional poem (under 100 lines) is 2s. It is particularly requested that all poems submitted should be typed and that a stamped addressed envelope be enclosed.

John Donne, by K. W. Gransden (Longmans, Men and Books, 1s. 6d.). Each may be described as a critical biography, and their value to the ordinary reader is assured by the standing of the authors, both of whom are distinguished scholars. Professor Barker Fairey's interpretation of *Heinrich Heine* (Clarendon Press, Cumberlege, 15s.) follows naturally on his truly creative studies of Goethe. Dante's *Divine Comedy* is now included in the Everyman's Library (Dent, 6s.) – as beautifully produced as are all the volumes in this wonderful series: and in Macdonald's Illustrated Classics *The Poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* is presented with a valuable introduction and notes by Morchard Bishop (10s. 6d.). Dealing with a greater poet still, we have before us, from Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, a magnificent edition in reduced fascimile of Shakespeare's First Folio. The editor is Helge Kükeritz. No devoted reader of the 'Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies, London 1623' could refrain from saving up four guineas to buy this memorable book once he has set eyes on it.

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America is represented by seven poets this quarter, and worthily. *A Book of Poems,* by Katherine Carr Henze (Wings Press, 2 dollars), is both human and happy . . . Robert Louis Stevenson-happy, and therefore good to listen to: . . . 'and you, Reader, may walk beside her if you will, Down bygone fields and up the distant hill.' The publishers of this book never lower their standard. *Silver Moccasins,* by Emma Ring Daly (2 dollars), is another of their clean-aired publications. The first half of *Bitter-Sweet* (unfortunate title), by Alexander Alan Steinbach is devoted to prose-poem meditations (Library Publishers, 2 dollars 50 cents) and his poetic vision may be summed up in the words of one example:

> Painting is memory in colour. Sculpture is memory in marble. Music is memory in song. Literature is memory in words. These murmur their afterglow in a dimension that laughs at time.

Lincoln Fitzell's *Selected Poems* (Alan Swallow, Denver, 2 dollars 75 cents) follows several other works of his, published during the past fourteen years, so that he is favourably known across the Atlantic, especially as he received the Shelley Memorial Award for his poetry. Robert Penn Warren introduced him to Alan Swallow. *The Poems of Gene Derwood* (Clarke and Way, 3 dollars) are by the wife of the poet Oscar Williams. Gene Derwood died last year before

any book of hers appeared. Both in verse and painting she revealed a strong imagination, richly expressed, and in the dark rhythmic quality of these poems a stark wisdom often emerges suddenly ('Solitude has no wars'). She painted portraits of Dylan Thomas, W. H. Auden, and Karl Shapiro.

The name of Lyon Phelps is familiar to us in England. We assume it to belong to the son of a leading American critic. William Lyon Phelps would have been impressed by *The Gospel Witch*, a poetic drama set in Salem, Massachusetts Bay, in 1692. Another play, this time fantastic and by no means sinister, is by an English writer, Peter Philip, who received for it the Peter Ustinov award as the winning entry in a British Drama League Festival – *Love and Lunacy* (J. Garnett Miller, 7s. 6d.). The opening scene is a hill-top on Atlantis in the remote past. The final scene is Luna and the Earth in the remote future. *Prelude to a Journey*, by Agnes Louise Hovde (Vantage Press, 2 dollars 75 cents) is a well-written prose-poem.

From America to Australia is not so far as poetry-readers might imagine, especially as we go round by Brazil and London. *Cinzas da Vida* comes from Brazil with the autographed 'greetings and fellowship' of the author, Fernando Whitaker: but alas, we cannot read a line of preface or poetry, although we reciprocate the message – in English. Robert Hale is the publisher of *Poems with Flute*, by Lewis Sowden (7s. 6d.). A charming volume, with poems of all sorts, from the dramatic in 'Street Meeting' to the satirical in 'Reverie on a Gold Mine,' most of them

> Touching a chord of distant sound
> In the memory – a summer bird
> In the tree-tops, and summer mute.

Lyric Images, by R. H. Morrison, author of *Lyrics from Pushkin*, and *Squatter's Luck*, by Ethel Anderson, are from Adelaide (Mary Martin, no price stated) and Melbourne (University Press, 12s. 6d.). The opening poem of *Squatter's Luck* contains, we think, more unfamiliar adjectives and nouns than any verse we know, past or present. But her compatriots will be at home among them, for the author declares that she writes of life as an Australian sees life. New Zealand follows naturally here, so we take next *By Wandering Tempests* (Mitre Press, 7s. 6d.), for which the author, A. J. Lancefield, has a sub-title, 'A Journey to New Zealand in Verse.' He was an immigrant in 1948, and here are his reactions. He gives authenticity to his earnest descriptions by placing

ORIOLE PRIZE 1955

ORIOLE (the Poets' Group of the Poetry Society) offers an award of £5 for the best Mystical Poem received. This should be unpublished, and should not exceed twenty-eight lines. The competition is open to all; entrance fee 2s. 6d. per entry. The adjudicators reserve the right to divide the prize or to withhold it if no entry is of sufficient merit. Competitors must adopt a pseudonym which should appear in block capitals both on the manuscript and on a sealed envelope containing the entrant's name and address. MSS will not be returned. The winning poem will be published in *The Poetry Review*. Closing date, 31st July, 1955. Address: Oriole Prize, The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, W.1.

each poem as he goes along, 'Off Cape Finisterre' being the first, and so to Christchurch, and so on.

In the April-June number of *The Poetry Review* the latest of G. S. Oddy's books of verse was reviewed by Kathleen Richardson. Now comes an earlier book of his, *Sonnets in D Minor,* which includes a poem once published in these pages, 'The Golden Age.' We understand that the author has a few copies available (5s.). In *Leeds University Poetry, 1954,* we remember especially Bernard Jones's poem on Thomas Hardy. The anthology is compiled with the advice of John Heath-Stubbs, Gregory Fellow in Poetry – an old contributor of ours – but we doubt if he is historically accurate in his own contribution:

> And Shakespeare too, without any doubt,
> Died by cause of a drinking-bout
> Under his favourite mulberry-tree:
> *Mors poetarum conturbat me.*

Several names familiar to our readers – Mary Winter Were, Peter Russell – are listed as contributors to another bright little anthology, *Poetry Folio* (1s. 6d.) published by the Kent and Sussex Poetry Society.

Finally, we pay tribute to Lord Sandwich by acknowledging a late copy of *Flowers of Fancy*, by 'George Montagu, Earl of Sandwich,' with floral designs by Joan Hassall. Incidentally the publishers are The Saint Catherine Press (7s. 6d.), who assure us that they have a great interest in *The Poetry Review* as they were 'the printers and publishers of the first number.' Lord Sandwich is now over eighty years old, and his observation of Nature and his gift in verse-writing remain constant:

> And so the convent, dimmed by age,
> Becomes a flowery pilgrimage;
> And, as all woodland lovers know,
> No primrose lives where oxlips blow.

'DEAR EDITORS - '

(The opinions expressed in the following Letters from Readers are not necessarily those of *The Poetry Review.*)

HALF-RHYMES

'Molly my sister and I fell out . . .' Mr. Geoffrey Johnson does not like half-rhymes. I do, but I am grateful to him for his explanation of his dislike, and I respect it.

Personally, I find half-rhymes neither ugly, affected, nor disappointing, but look upon them as a valuable addition to poetic technique. It seems to me that they may help to convey other states of mind besides inner discord, and that they may contribute to a word-music of extreme delicacy, sometimes relieving the bluntness of full rhymes, sometimes reinforcing their effect. Musical analogies are dangerous when discussing poetry, but I should compare the use of half-rhymes to that of the chromatic scale. W. H. Auden's 'Lay your sleeping head, my love' contains some very fine examples of this subtle word-music.

Commenting on the last section of Yeats's 'Under Ben Bulben', Mr. Johnson asks, 'Take away the tortured ingenuity of head-laid, spot-cut, etc., and what is left but prosaic and egotistic statement?' These half-rhymes do not seem to me to show any signs of tortured ingenuity, they sound more like the strokes of a chisel upon stone; the sound varies as the angle of the chisel varies.

What *is* left? For me (since I feel those readers who may be interested should hear the other side of the answer), there are word-music, imagery, and philosophy echoing the advice of Krishna to Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita. The word-music is of a bleak kind, for this section is the culmination of a monolithic poem – forty-four out of the fifty-eight words are monosyllables!

Much of the imagery is rock-imagery – the bare top of Ben Bulben, the ancient cross, the rejected marble, the local limestone, even the cliff in Drumcliff. Other imagery is concerned with ancestry and tradition, the rector, the church, the ancient cross. The road and the horseman are also ancient traditional images. (Incidentally, what a powerful name is Drumcliff in this particular context.)

Mr. Johnson finds the statement of the section I quoted 'egotistic'. It does not seem more so to me than the statements of any other poets who write about themselves – alive or dead!

P. E. DUNN

SHAKESPEARE AND THE YES-MEN

Many of your readers, sensitive and humane as are all true poets and friends of poetry, must be wondering if they are wrong to be shocked by the all-too-general acceptance of various new devices for peace and war – Who are we, they are probably asking themselves, among so many? Let them take heart from the greatest and noblest of our poets. In *The Merchant of Venice* (Act III, Sc. 2) he made this tremendous indictment of the leaders of thought in his day:

> The world is still deceived with ornament.
> In Law, what plea so tainted and corrupt,
> But, being seasoned with a gracious voice,
> Obscures the show of evil? In religion,
> What damned error, but some sober brow
> Will bless it and approve it with a text,
> Hiding the grossness with fair ornament?

PARRY TRENCHARD

THAT'S THE SPIRIT!

When I submitted a poem to the Editorial Board of *The Poetry Review* I hardly dared hope that I would receive more than the customary rejection slip – bleak and curt, printed of course – with which my MSS, so far, had been returned from commercial periodicals.

After recovering from the initial shock of seeing a poem of mine returned from you *covered with pencil markings*, I took a closer look at it and discovered – to my annoyance – that your criticisms were remarkably well-founded.

DON DONALD

TOWARDS PARNASSUS:

LILIAN BOWES LYON POETRY AWARD

WILLIAM KEAN SEYMOUR

The invitation was for 'the submission of original verse by Scottish poets anywhere in the world': a comprehensive one which should have attracted a vast number of entries, not only from the Land o' Cakes but from the rest of Great Britain and the English-speaking world. Not more than one-third drew inspiration from Scottish scenes and recollections. Only two competitors essayed the Doric, rather half-heartedly and obviously in compromise Anglo-Scots. Not a single 'starter' came from the New Lallans stables, and I looked in vain for a latter-day Tam o' Shanter speeding on a motor-bike.

A large number of the submissions were devoid of quality either in impulse or execution. Of the baker's dozen that remained one seemed to stand clear and certain as the best. I marked the script 'First Prize' without hesitation. The placing of the second and third awards gave me more difficulty, but after a proper period of 'agonizing' this was accomplished. It was then that I opened the three sealed envelopes.

The awards are as follows: First Prize (five pounds) to A. V. Stuart, of Edinburgh, for 'The Door Between', a poem at once flexible and deeply wrought, which poignantly bridges the gulf between the living world and the unseen. In its message of creative endurance and consolation it has kinship with the work of the poet we honour; Second Prize (three pounds) to N. K. Cruickshank, New Aberdour, Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire, for 'Northern Music', tenderly evocative of Scottish piety and that singing familiarity with the Psalms which Burns so beautifully described in 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' (to which indeed this poem makes a worthy pendant) – Miss Cruickshank's images of hearts' tears bright 'as the peeled scarlet of intense rowans', and of Jesus walking upon 'rhyming lines of psalms' are notably successful; Third Prize (two pounds) to J. F. Hendry, Oban, Argyll (see our next issue), for 'Cailleach an Dudain', a poem of Gaelic inspiration celebrating a female figure well-known in Highland mythology, 'a personification of the forces of Nature to be feared and placated', and achieving a style strikingly individual.

Highly commended are Gladys L. Burton, Ayr; Marion Deschamps, Malakoff (France); Sir Patrick Laird, Edinburgh; and Alexander Sloan, Greenock. Also commended are Alice R. Kendall, Cyprus; Wm. Price Turner; John Nelson, Assam; Dr. J. Munro MacLennan, Ottawa; H. T. Douglas Robinson, St. Petersburg, Florida; and Kathrine Sorley Walker.

THE DOOR BETWEEN

A. V. STUART

Leave the door ajar
For the dead to enter. They are not so far
But that they sometimes turn aside to say
A word of greeting on their star-led way.

Keep your heart still
In patience and in pain. Seek not to fill
With too much clamour your too empty life.
They cannot reach you through the noisy strife.

But if you dare to own
Grief's solitude, willing to sit alone
In meek endurance, there will come an hour
When the still room blooms sweetly as a flower
With the vanished presence; when a hand is laid
Light as a snowflake on your desolate head;
And the familiar tender tones are heard
Murmuring a soundless, an endearing word
To your listening heart, that leaps with a shock of bliss
To greet this waft of love, this bodiless kiss.

Better your grief,
And this rare moment's exquisite relief
Of recognition, than with busy din
Of exigent life to close the door between.

NORTHERN MUSIC

N. K. CRUICKSHANK

Hearing them sing
We find how surely we were chosen –
We choosing elsewhere since were chosen –
By the hard North: its warm lament,
Whose simple strains inspire
Hearts' tears to glow as bright
As the peeled scarlet of intense rowan;

Its worship unadorned as barns,
When Jesus in a homespun cloak
Walked upon rhyming lines of psalms
With a lamb on his arm;
And stern-faced congregations stood
Praising their God
To tender Crimond or to bare strong Kedron.

PREMIUM COMPETITION REPORT 23

ALUN LLEWELLYN

The adjudicator of this Competition has had the rare but pleasant experience of finding that, from the point of technical competence and, for the most part of content, not one of the poems submitted was unworthy of consideration for the prize.

It is an occurrence worth noting. In his judgment, however, many of the entries fell short, either in the adoption of a free technique which had, as so often happens, the effect of allowing the thought to over-spill itself and lose that essential concentration which is the mark of the best poetry and effects the instant communication by which it operates; or else in achieving a formal shape which, nevertheless, had only a mood to communicate without giving that mood its transmutation into a shaped experience.

Such poems as (to select a few at random) Mrs. A. T. Jones's 'Genesis', Miss Elizabeth Drury's 'Listening Silence', Miss L. V. Thomas's 'Winter Will Tell', A. Sloan's fine 'Seascape' or Mrs. M. Denyer's 'Lost Submarine', had in consequence to be relegated to a second position. But others had all the essentials of the best verse, form and discipline, construction of thought and impact of feeling.

'Question', by Mr. Roberts, 'Thriller' (Miss M. Parker), 'Wild Geese' (A. Baird), 'Cain' (Miss D. Spring), 'Heaven on Earth' (Miss M. Lees), 'Of What Was Adam Made' (A. E. Dodds), all possessed these qualities and made the decision most difficult. Mr. Dodds, perhaps, suffered from the fact that his poem was an adaptation. The originality of thought, the spareness of expression and the successful communication through rhythm and form of an intensely conceived idea reaching a controlled emotional pitch, made the ultimate choice 'Command Performances' by Malcolm H. Tattersall of Eastbourne.

COMMAND PERFORMANCES

MALCOLM H. TATTERSALL

God sometimes rests, with dance or mime
  His heart beguiling;
We gave our measure many a time
  And left Him smiling.

Sometimes He bade: 'Let music breathe
  Through My creation!'
– And sketched a theme; we pleased Him with
  Our variation.

Sometimes He reads. In a green nook
  Each other finding,
We were the pages of His book
  – And grass for binding.

FRIDAY EVENINGS AT PORTMAN SQUARE

'The Battle for Beauty is Never Finally Won'

Leaflets will be distributed shortly with a list of Programmes, arranged by the Readings Committee, for Friday evenings, 6-30 to 7-30 approx., during the autumn at 33 Portman Square – 'Everybody Welcome'. Admission 1s. Non-members 2s.

PORTMAN SQUARE—MAGIC AND MEMORIES

Magic carpets were spread in March. Roberta Shuttleworth brought the first of them (and some delicate shells and shapes) to convey us with most perceptive travel-talk through her best-loved country of poetic imagination. Kelty MacLeod and Isla Cameron next took us into the heart of their native lands of folk-song and ballad. How authentic that was! The real voice and the true accent, the magic that can't be written down but must be in the singer's blood.

Then more Irish poetry to honour St. Patrick on another Friday. Here, W. B. Yeats held up rather more than his share of the carpet perhaps, but Goldsmith, Joyce, A. E. and Katherine Tynan did their bit, and the readers, Alan Phillips, Phyllis Newton and June Franklin gave great pleasure.

At the crowded Audience Night nearly everyone read their own verse, which your chairman felt was just as it should be. Stephen Graham, always welcome, tore us off a strip of Don Marquis. We really ought to have an evening with this most unacademic Don! . . . Then, on April Fool's Day, Irene Brent and Redvers Kyle gently pulled our legs with a very fresh and jolly programme of witty verse, wittily read.

In mid-April Robert Bridger and Kelty MacLeod read some Mystical Poetry. To hear Robert Bridger speaking T. S. Eliot as his sensitive fingers played over the Braille script was a moving experience. Wilton Cole, always splendid in Shakespeare, kept St. George's Day and the Swan's birthday most worthily and was supported with delicate art by Kathleen Penny. Another Day – Anzac – was celebrated by Mary Giles and Dorothy Newby-Fraser, when Australian poems were beautifully read in the presence of visitors from Down Under, where a flourishing affiliated Society thrives.

Our very welcome friend, A. E. Coppard, came in May. June Franklin, an ideal reader, captured his frolicking mood in the poetry he chose for her, and the poet-storyteller himself read two of his prose-pieces, humorous and yet poignant, rounding off an hour of sheer delight with his latest poems.

Remembered Voices, ever-singing, were heard again when the late Caron Rock, Wrenne Jarman, and E. H. W. Meyerstein were recalled with happy sidelights from the chair (Robert Armstrong) and warm understanding by the readers, Colette King, Pamela Corsie, Audrey Bullard and Clifford Turner. Lesley Deane spoke memorably of her friend Caron Rock whose noble poem, 'He is the Lonely Greatness', stands for many as a beacon of remembrance to a great human being. Many of us were thinking too of another very real person – Fanny Moore, whose sudden passing, a few days previously, was hardly realizable. Death has made his darkness beautiful with them.

K.V.R.

THE HOWARD PARSONS SONNET COMPETITION FOR 1955–56

The Poetry Society has the pleasure of announcing a new Competition to succeed the competition in memory of Lord Alfred Douglas for a sonnet Shakespearian or upon any subject.

The prize of Eight Guineas which is generously offered by Mr. Howard Parsons, may be divided at the discretion of the adjudicator. The winning poem or poems will be published with the awards in *The Poetry Review*. Competitors must retain copies of their poems as these cannot be returned. The sonnets should bear a definite title and not merely be marked 'Sonnet'. Not more than two sonnets may be submitted by each competitor by 30th June, 1956. Address 'Sonnet Competition', The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1. Entries should bear names and addresses of competitors. No previously published poem may be entered.

THE GREENWOOD COMPETITION FOR 1954–55

The Poetry Society is empowered by the executors of the late Mrs. Julia Wickham Greenwood to offer the sum of Twenty Pounds as the Shirley Carter Greenwood Prize for the best single poem in open competition.

Entries should be addressed 'The Greenwood Prize', 33 Portman Square, London, W.1. Only one poem may be submitted by any one competitor, the length not to exceed 250 lines; no previously published poem may be entered. The full name and address of the author must be given and a stamped addressed envelope enclosed if return of the poem is desired. If a nom-de-plume is adopted, name and address of sender must be given in a closed envelope bearing the pseudonym. The winning poem will be printed in *The Poetry Review* and may be reprinted at the discretion of the Editorial Board, who may also reserve near winners for publication in *The Poetry Review*. Closing date is 31st August, 1955.

THE PREMIUM COMPETITION

The above competition continues as before with the total entrance fees as prize money which may be won outright by a single competitor or may be divided at the discretion of the Premium Adjudicator. An entrance fee of 2s. 6d. will be charged, and a stamped addressed envelope should be enclosed if a receipt is desired. Competitors must observe rules given in previous issues. Closing date 1st September, 1955.

AT LUNCHEON ON 7TH MAY – A HAPPY RETURN

ODETTE TCHERNINE

The Poetry Society's Luncheon, now held annually, was attended on 7th May by a constellation of significant names, and Mrs. Violet Adamson and her helpers may well be happy about it.

The Guests of Honour, sitting on either side of President Thomas Moult, a resourceful and benevolent Chairman, were Richard Church, poet and essayist, two remarkable veterans, Hon.-Captain C. B. Fry, famous in an all-round way, and J. G. Wilson, C.B.E., head of the bookselling firm of Bumpus, Moira Lister (Vicomtesse d'Orthez), who has since gone on a Shakespearian world-tour with Peggy Ashcroft, John Gielgud, and the Stratford (No. 2) Company, Madame Sophie Wyss, well-known lieder singer and descendant of Goethe, Miss Margaret Rawlings, and Basil Thomas, author of the successful play, *Book of the Month*.

Greetings came by cable from The Poetry Society of America, and regrets for their absence were read from Audrey Russell (one of our Gold Medallists now broadcaster of many famous 'live' events), Gwen Frangcon-Davies, whose brilliant Shakespeare recital at Portman Square last year is vividly remembered, Christopher Fry in a charmingly modest letter, Lord Dunsany in California, Michael Ayrton, the artist, in Spain, and those scintillating irrepressibles, Joyce Grenfell and Peter Ustinov.

Then followed two pleasant little ceremonies. The memory of Lilian Bowes Lyon had been honoured in a competition for Scottish poets, and John Graddon, our Hon. Treasurer (who spoke of 'this Poetry Society of no subsidies' and of its valuable work for poetry, poets, drama, and readers of poetry), announced Miss A. V. Stuart, of Edinburgh, as the winner. (See page 176 of this issue for the Adjudicator's Report). Miss Stuart had travelled all the way from Scotland to receive her well-deserved prize, and with unassuming graciousness and pleasure she expressed her appreciation in a brief speech. Mrs. Adamson also made a presentation – to Miss Kathleen Cracroft (now Mrs. Sheppard), a cheque on behalf of the members of the Society.

Before the Toasts were proposed Richard Church gave an address on the Poet's dilemma. He referred to the good work done for poetry by the smaller magazines, and urged, as Mr. Wilson did later, that poetry (unlike Victorian children) should be heard as well as seen. Mr. Church praised the gift of verse-speaking so beautifully revealed on many occasions by Margaret Rawlings and Moira Lister.

Then came the Toasts. Moira Lister, Sophie Wyss, and J. G. Wilson proposed 'The Poetry Society', and Margaret Rawlings responded. Miss Lister took the opportunity of thanking the Society for the help we had given her in preparation for a recent TV broadcast of a Guy de Maupassant story, although on more than one occasion we had been her debtors: and Madame Wyss, who was accompanied to the Luncheon by her husband, Captain Arnold Gyde, of Heinemann the publishers, described with unaffected and infectious fun the visits she remembered of world famous people to her family home in Switzerland. Carl Spitteler, the Nobel Prize winner had 'dandled' her as a child on his knee!

Introduced – if any introduction was necessary! – as the well-loved friend of poets who presides over London's leading bookshop, 'a haven of peace full of sweet sounds and scents that hurt not, where the smell of books is a quiet joy', John G. Wilson spoke of the need for reading aloud, as they used to do in Scottish homes. But Poetry needs direction, and that is where *The Poetry Review* (so much improved) is helpful. Wilson's reminiscences – of G.B.S. and others – were so rich that many of his listeners must have wondered why he has not yet shown any sign that he is writing his autobiography.

Margaret Rawlings replied to that threefold Toast. The President explained that the fact of her being a member of The Poetry Society had not prevented him from including her among the Guests of Honour for the second time. Her theme was a fitting one for a star of broadcasting, television, and the stage – the beauty and music of words. She went on to ask what was this recurring plaint about not understanding modern poetry? 'It is not necessary to understand a flower or a flake of snow,' she said, and, quoting lines from Shakespeare; 'If I don't understand a poet, I think it's just too bad, but not bad for the poet. I don't tear at bits of Dylan Thomas. Think on this as a musical analogy. Pick out so-called "difficult" poetry phrase by phrase, as if you were reading and analysing an unfamiliar piece of music.'

Not in prose, but in accordance with custom Kennedy Williamson proposed the Toast 'Our Guests' with a witty, pithy verse-ballad of his own. A Pied Piper smile came and went as elfish Mr. Williamson shot out rapier rhymes of fun with velvet tips. Neither hosts nor guests escaped, as may be gathered from his brilliant lines which are reproduced in the following pages. And nary a laboured line anywhere!

Charles Burgess Fry had exchanged so many quips with the President during the Luncheon (for everybody's benefit) that he was in fine form when he rose to reply. And, as Robert Morley did last year, he sent everybody home with a smile. He had been described in Thomas Moult's introduction as the Admirable Crichton come to life – record-breaking athlete, Sussex county cricketer who had played for England here and in Australia, first-class footballer who had played for the losing team in a Cup Final, novelist and editor of the best boys' magazine of all time, author of the *Keybook of the League of Nations,* Parliamentary Candidate in three General Elections, Naval Commander and Director of the famous training ship *Mercury*, and – a welcome guest for this especially – always a Friend of Poetry. Every speech on that sunny May afternoon was splendid, but I shall remember best those witty, friendly word-duels between Thomas Moult and C. B. Fry, who has an infinite sparkle. Wonderful unself-conscious exponent of the art of ageless age, he stood out like some figure of ancient Greece, a speaker of fine-drawn kindly charm and personality where age is not of weariness and long living, but of experience and a wide liking for humanity.

The legend of C. B. Fry had materialized before my eyes. He had been a spell-binder. He is still.

'OUR GUESTS'

KENNEDY WILLIAMSON

(Speech delivered in proposing the Toast at the Poetry Society's Luncheon, 1955)

We folk whose habitat is Portman Square
Are strangers in these purlieus of Mayfair;
But no less cordially do we greet
Here in this borrowed haunt in Charles Street
Our guests whom severally now I name.
Though they're accustomed to the world's acclaim,
They've never had a welcome more sincere
Than that which has been offered to them here;
And if I venture on a quiet word,
Couched in the second person, not the third,
I'd say you're jolly fortunate, you know,
All tickets sold out fourteen days ago.

Where shall I start? Here's CHARLES BURGESS FRY
Whose graceful batsmanship enthralled the eye
In days when Fortune, anything but stingy
With artists, paired him up with Ranjitshinji.
How perfectly he has revealed since then
His bat was no more mighty than his pen.
He turns a sonnet that delights the lovers
Of beauty as his driving through the covers
Once charmed the connoisseurs, and made the bowler
Long vainly for a boundary-controller.

I pass in this appraisal of the great
To one we all are proud to celebrate,
A lady to whose patronymic I'm
Persuaded there's no satisfactory rhyme.
Can drawlings, squallings, bawlings, caterwaulings
Find any context with Miss MARGARET RAWLINGS?
Of course they can't. Accordingly this time
I'm stumped in all attempts to make a rhyme.
Her programmes, as I'm sure you will agree,
Bestow a kudos on the B B C.
That august body, we devoutly hope,
Will give her wider and increasing scope.
Her masculine admirers, I'll be bound,
Can have no heartsease, while *she* is around.

I've lately done some scholarly research
Into the less-known works of RICHARD CHURCH
At Newnes, the moguls left us in the lurch
By killing 'John o' London' where in Church

The Muses ever had a friend at court,
And Poetry could count on his support.
His record is unsullied, without smirch.
There is indeed no knave within this Church
Which has a batless belfry. Therefore long
May it resound with melody and song.

The Poetry Society is in debt
To one whose rôles as Charmian, Juliet,
Olivia, Desdemona and a score
Of others bring her eulogies galore.
Miss MOIRA LISTER gives us real delights
At No. 33 on Friday nights.
She'll win yet greener laurels, I am sure,
On her projected continental tour.

I'd like now to include within my compass
A mental visit to the firm of Bumpus
In Oxford Street. (All those who wish to place
Orders with me for advertising space
In speeches that I make, may now remit
Their copy with emolument for it.)
Where was I? I'm afraid there'll be a rumpus
About that interjection. Messrs. Bumpus
Have a presiding deity and he'll
Be known to you as scholar, bibliophile
And humanist. JOHN WILSON, you we greet!
(Remember – 477 Oxford Street!)

Now, gentles, listen to my little piece
In commendation of MISS SOPHIA WYSS
Who with her Gallic cadences has stirred
The hearts of radio listeners on the Third,
And pioneered the compositions written
With such *élan* by British Mr. Britten.
Goethe belongs to her ancestral tree;
We hail the maestro through his legatee.

In adulation of *Book of the Month*
Our plaudits echo to the n+1th.
We hail the clever author of that play.
His stamping-ground is Wolverhampton way.
If BASIL THOMAS now has made a pot
Of money from that plot and counterplot,
John Keats would still be writing with a wink
About the Pot of Basil, don't you think?

Poets who charge your pens with purple ink,
Charge now your glasses. Be prepared to drink
And toast right heartily from those same glasses
The gentleman and ladies, lads and lasses
Who are our guests today. Let there be no
Quaffing of any limpid H_2O.
Within your beakers let there now be seen
Only the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
Still quiring with the young-eyed cherubim.
People of Portman Square, heed these behests.
I give you now this honoured toast: THE GUESTS!

*

POET'S PLEASURE: NEWS FROM THE CENTRES

BY THE EDITORIAL STAFF

Poetry for Shut-ins . . . Happy thought! Recently in these Centre reports it was suggested to members and their friends that the idea of a 'pen-kinship' might be welcomed by anyone who is confined to the house or perhaps a room through ill-health or physical disability. Shut-in members in St. Petersburg, Florida, U.S.A. were already being benefited by a scheme through which the Centre's more fortunate members met regularly and planned letters to them: and they, from couch or wheeled chair, wrote back.

Miss Elsie M. Banister, of Southport, Lancashire, herself a 'shut-in,' is anxious to undertake some extension of her artistic interests by inaugurating through the auspices of The Poetry Society a pen-kinship between invalid and disabled member-poets and readers to draw them – Miss Banister's words – into a special Fellowship of comforting and cheering correspondence and to further their interest in Poetry. She sends an invitation, therefore, to those interested, not necessarily house-bound, but living in English-speaking countries (foreign languages would need translation and probably cause headaches, physical and financial!). Will they please write, enclosing stamped addressed envelope, to Miss Elsie M. Banister, Dahna Dene, Chatsworth Road, Ainsdale, Southport, Lancs.

We at headquarters offer our good wishes and any possible assistance – to Miss Banister, who surely deserves to be addressed as The Lady President of The British Sunny Circle for Shut-Ins!

NOTTINGHAM

The Press-agent for this Midland Centre sends very pleasant news about recent doings. The Spoken Festival of Poetry was successfully held, as in past years, at the Colville Street Church Hall, with the Chief Adviser to the Leicester Education Committee, Mrs. Plowman, R.A.N., adjudicating. A fortnight or so earlier a Poetry Reading was given in the Co-operative Hall. Alan Rook was in the chair, and the readers were Audrey Aalbregt, Principal of the Avon Academy, Dorothy Freestone, Winifred Riley, and Ronald Gill.

Mr. Rook's play, *Robin Hood,* will be performed in the open-air at his home, Wooten Hall, Derbyshire, during the summer. Mrs. M. Riley is the hon. secretary – 25 Medina Drive, Tollerton, Notts.

The Fire and the Fountain

BY JOHN PRESS

The author describes the way in which a poem germinates and grows in a poet's mind, and postulates that a poet is a man who is gifted with an unusually powerful physical sensibility, together with an unusually strong feeling for the formal properties of language. 25*s. net.*

CHARLES WILLIAMS

The Region of the Summer Stars

and

Taliessin Through Logres

are now obtainable bound together at 12*s.* 6*d. net.*

Seed of Adam

AND OTHER PLAYS

With an Introduction by Anne Ridler, 6*s. net.*

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Poems by

Clifford Dyment

Experiences and Places

A new and highly individual collection, by a poet who, wrote the *Listener* reviewing his last book, "offers us much that is unusual and profound in a sincere and human way". 6*s.*

DENT

New in the larger format

Everyman's Library

Wordsworth's Poems

Newly re-edited and introduced by Philip Wayne, M.A. 3 vols. Nos. 203, 311, 998. Each 7*s.*

Palgrave's Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics

With 88-page supplement of modern lyric poems, some by writers of to-day. No. 96. Each 6*s.*

Homer's Iliad

Newly translated by S. O. Andrew and Michael Oakley. No. 453. 6*s.*

The Golden Treasury of Longer Poems

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NATAL AND DURBAN (S.A.)

Founder and chairman of this go-ahead Centre overseas, Mr. Thomas H. Lawrence, is still doing much profitable pioneering. He has recently broadcast about the Natal Poetry Society and Durban Poetry Groups, which has held a successful Verse Competition, some of the prizes being contributed by leading book publshers and bookstores. Members of The Poetry Society in England who may be visiting South Africa may like to know that meetings are held regularly at the Y.M.C.A., Durban, and that social and informal gatherings are held at 15 Overport Drive. Miss I. M. Jardine is the hon. secretary.

SUFFOLK

The Bull and Oyster Inn, Pin Mill; the garden at Great Ruffins, Wickham Bishops; the Oriental Café, Ipswich; and the adult education college at Belstead House, near Ipswich – what delightful meeting-places this East Anglian Centre is able to arrange! And what excellent lectures the members are given. At the café in February, for example, the title of the programme was 'Gramophone Records,' including readings from *Hamlet*, The Canterbury Tales, Shakespeare's sonnets, and Wordsworth, Pope, and Yeats. Then, the following month a member, Miss C. Watson, arranged a programme of 'Poetry, Prose, and Music,' at Belstead. In April, at Pin Mill, the chairman, Mr. F. H. A. Engleheart lectured on the poetry of Ruth Pitter, and members read their own poems – subject, spring. Maytime guests of Mrs. Hudson at her beautiful home in Essex, the members heard Mr. R. N. Currey, the poet who lives at Colchester, speak on 'Writing Poetry for the Radio.' Good work, Miss K. M. Turner (hon. secretary, 1 Willoughby Road, Ipswich)!

A rare copy of George Crabbe's poems has been presented to the Suffolk Centre by M. Ballard of Surrey. It was published in Paris in 1829. The George Crabbe competition for poems 'with a Suffolk flavour' to commemorate the bicentenary of Crabbe's birth has closed with approximately fifty entries.

WALTON AND WEYBRIDGE

Kennedy Williamson's address in March was entitled 'The Epithet in Poetry,' Member of the Editorial Board of *The Poetry Review*, Mr. Williamson was editor of *The Writer* for thirteen years. He is also associated with *Troubadour*, a magazine of verse now in its third number. Some of his own fine poetry was read after his enthralling lecture.

In April, the work of the American poet, John Crowe Ransom was discussed by Kenneth Lillington, and a letter was read from Wilfrid Gibson, who is president of the Centre. Mr. Lillington read his own poems in May. A Shakespeare evening is being arranged for the third Thursday in July, and Mrs. Elsie Gittens, 28 Oatlands Drive, Weybridge, will answer all enquiries.

*

Finally, here is a list of Centres in addition to those already mentioned:

BELFAST

Meetings monthly, Kensington Hotel, College Square. Hon. Secretary, Miss Hettie Haddock, 18 Ashley Gardens.

BOSTON (U.S.A.)

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Mrs. Van den Bergh, Little Basing, Bray, Berks., and Mrs. Day, Westwood, Windsor Road, Maidenhead.

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Meetings second Saturday in each month at Mrs. Lambert's restaurant, 45 Church Road. All enquiries to Miss K. G. Boycott, 'Twemlow', Jane Lane, Burgess Hill, Sussex.

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Mr. Irving Miller, 35 George Street, Dumfries, will answer all enquiries.

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All enquiries to Mrs. Campbell, Savernake School, Astor Road, Ealing, W.5.

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KENSINGTON

Enquiries should be sent to the founder, Mr. A. Vivian Burbury, 12 Bassett Road, London, W.10. Meetings are held monthly on a Tuesday evening.

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VOLUME XLVI · NUMBER IV

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TO OUR WOULD-BE CONTRIBUTORS

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2. One side only of the paper must be used.
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4. A self-addressed envelope must always be enclosed either stamped or, if an overseas contributor, the Coupon-Response International. Otherwise, no MSS will be considered. Loose stamps cannot be regarded as a substitute. Except in rare instances an introductory letter is not necessary.
5. In their own interest writers should notice that poems over thirty lines in length have a very doubtful chance of acceptance.
6. If helpful editorial suggestions are made with a returned MS, please do not reply challenging the advice. Requests for criticism, moreover, are not invited. It should be remembered that The Poetry Society already has a well-organized service for expert advice, as announced in each issue.
7. Not more than four poems should be submitted at one time. Two is an ideal number.
8. The Editorial Board does not accept responsibility for the safe custody and return of any unsolicited MSS. Authors are requested not to write expressing anxiety lest their MS is lost in the post. MSS are seldom or never lost in the post.
9. Acceptance or rejection of a MS cannot reasonably be expected until at least three months have elapsed. A decision may take longer. Inquiries by telephone cannot be dealt with.
10. The receipt of a proof does not necessarily imply immediate publication.

THESE PAGES—AN OFFERING TO

Eden Phillpotts

Be true to all of glorifying thought
Yourself can reach, O creature with a mind

Prelude: A LIVING INFLUENCE

Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world. So Shelley declared in his long-famous 'Defence of Poetry'. And it may or may not be by mere chance that just about midsummer this year, when goodwill was said to have begun to flow across the world again, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Hammarskjöld of Sweden, told a television interviewer that his chief recreation is reading poems, while at the same time two other things were to be noted. A Russian broadcaster paid tribute to 'a great genius of the English people' (Shelley himself) for writing in defence of man from all forms of injustice, oppression and violence; and a poet living to-day, here in England, published a satirical novel in which the Devil takes a holiday on earth and is horrified to find that his own most evil plans have been put into practice, and that the world is now worse than hell!

*

The novel we refer to is by Alfred Noyes,* who was John Masefield's principal rival for the Poet Laureateship when it became vacant in the late 'twenties. Apart from Mr. Noyes's satirical commentary on international politics and policies, among the Devil's horrifying experiences (incognito, of course) is an up-to-date literary party. At this 'a weedy youth with long black hair which he constantly tossed back out of his eyes with a girlish jerk of the head' is introduced as the editor of *Catastrophe* and asked to say a few words about the new tendencies in poetry:

> 'Immense progress (he said) has of course been made since the days of Gertrude Stein; our object now, instead of the repetition of the same phrase in order to hypnotize the consciousness, is to break down sentence-structure and to destroy the connections between one word and another, so that the splendour of the isolated words may stand out like stars in a midnight sky. Thus we make an end of the last relics of mere representation.'

Lord Dunsany and Lord Samuel will enjoy those few words.

*

**The Devil Takes a Holiday* (John Murray, 10s. 6d.).

An original feature of the Soho Fair, London, held in the second week in July, was the public recital by poets in Golden Square. Mr. André Deutsch, the Soho publisher, offered a prize of twenty-five pounds for the best poem. It was won by Victor Musgrave, who lives on the confines of Soho. The competition was, however, open to poets from all parts. A broadsheet of the poems which were read was printed and sold on the streets, price two shillings. It proved to be well worth the money. Besides the prize-winning poem, 'Who Can Love the Holly?' poems by Thomas Blackburn (second prize) and Michael Hamburger (third prize) were included, and so were some verses by Dannie Abse, a good poem by John Singer – 'The cure for love is love' – and something quite apart by James Kirkup on the ghosts of Hiroshima, something to remember and a really fine contribution to the Fair.

*

Names make news here as elsewhere, especially if they are the names of distinguished people in The Poetry Society, and if the news relates to their literary and artistic doings. We have already announced that Stephen Graham's new novel, *Pay as You Run*, is being published by Benn, and now Chatto and Windus announce *Sleep*, by Dr. Marie Stopes. This is a prose-work, but poetry illuminates it. 'None of us could live without sleep,' Dr. Stopes reminds us. 'It is as essential to the human race as food. Indeed, our bodies revolt sooner without sleep than without food.' She hopes that her book will be helpful, for 'countless people suffer from sleeplessness, and no expert in the world really understands what it is.'

Miss Margaret Rawlings, whose Poetry Readings have again been giving pleasure and help to B.B.C. listeners in the Light Programme, is going to be busy acting in Shakespeare's plays at the Old Vic Theatre, London, this season. New books of poetry by P. D. Cummins and Phoebe Hesketh are to be published by Macmillan and Heinemann respectively. And Geoffrey Johnson has collaborated in *The Oxford Book of Spoken Verse and Prose*, which, in two volumes, is due to appear this autumn.

*

In our Summer number we reported with sorrow the death of Mrs. Fanny Moore, a member of the General Council until last year. Our sympathy was expressed for her husband, Mr. B. P. Moore, a higher Civil servant and an accomplished classical scholar. Only a brief while later came the news of his death also, and *The Times* obituary included this passage: 'When his wife died last May, few thought that he could long survive her. Their gifted son had been killed in 1940 by enemy action while serving in the R.A.F. A daughter alone survives them.' And now our sympathy goes out to her in turn.

*

American poetry of to-day has lost one of its most accomplished writers. Wallace Stevens has died at the age of seventy-five. His first book was published in 1923 when he was forty-four, and his eighth in 1951. Recognition came slowly to him, and he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for poetry only this year.

Obscurity was one of Wallace Stevens's characteristics, but here is a fragment of his poem 'Sunday Morning', clear enough to be quoted in several obituaries:

> Deer walk upon our mountains, and the quail
> Whistle about us their spontaneous cries;
> Sweet berries ripen in the wilderness;
> And, in the isolation of the sky
> At evening, casual flocks of pigeons make
> Ambiguous undulations as they sink,
> Downward to darkness, on extended wing.

*

Without comment – none is needed – we reprint the following 'leading article' from a London morning paper which boasts several million readers:

> 'Pay Up For Poetry. – The Arts Council – the body that backs operas, ballets, and the like – is still throwing your money about.
>
> Last year it spent £3,300 on poetry readings. Another £2,000 went to the Poetry Book Society.
>
> Why waste this public money, even if it is only a few thousand pounds? People who are fond of poetry can enjoy it without being subsidised.
>
> They can read it in the libraries – or hear it on the Third Programme two or three times every week!

*

Postscripts.– Miss Ruth Pitter, a contributor to *The Poetry Review,* has been awarded The Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry, 1955. Last year Miss Pitter won the Heinemann Foundation award by the Royal Society of Literature . . . For 'opening new paths in the art of poetry in the West,' T. S. Eliot has been awarded the Goethe Prize of ten thousand marks by the Hamburg municipal government. He has devoted it to a fund for last year's flood victims in Germany . . . Specimen of the writing to be read in serious literary papers of our day: 'It is typical of this genuine and unabashed poet that he wrote his best verse of the time about the anguish of being left by his wife.' The time referred to is the present, the poet is still living . . . Kennedy Williamson of this Board has been invited to lecture to the Royal Society of Literature – on 'The Epithet in Poetry' at 5.30 p.m., Thursday, 20th October, at 1 Hyde Park Gardens, W.2. He would welcome the supporting presence of his friends. John Connell takes the chair . . .

THE EDITORIAL BOARD

THE OAK TREE

EVA NENDICK

First as a mellow seed the acorn lay
  Among the meadow grasses where it fell,
Perchance to be discovered on a day
  By some gay urchin whom the midday bell
Had just released from study for a space.
All freedom is reflected in his face
  As with a sturdy arm he idly throws
  His find into the air, nor ever knows
The far-flung harvest of his action then.
  He gave as largely as a king bestows –
He gave an oak tree to his fellow men!

That acorn, scattered by a child at play,
  Now loosened from its loving-cup or shell,
Maybe was trodden in the kindly clay
  By pastured cattle. In its tiny cell
It held the hidden glory and the grace
Of noble branches, all the living lace
  Of twig and leaf through which the far sky shows.
  Safe underneath the winter's frost and snows
The youngster's legacy remained, till when
  The living green unfolded to disclose
He gave an oak tree to his fellow men!

The sapling grew, as seasons passed away,
  A mighty tree and monarch of the dell.
The boy became a man – worked, drew his pay,
  And lived sad, happy, poor, rich, ill or well.
No doubt he saw, around the oak tree's base,
Another generation of his race
  Disport itself in games as free as those
  That pleased his youth, before we need suppose
He died in age about three score and ten.
  As for his epitaph, it aptly goes:
'He gave an oak tree to his fellow men.'

Three score and ten? The forest trees obey
  Another law of life: their common spell

Of time upon this earth is more than may
  Be claimed by man. Long centuries might tell
Their tale of wind and weather through the chase.
And many a branching veteran still trace
  His shadow on the sward. Then tempest blows,
  And presently where once a proud tree rose
Lies but a log of wood athwart the glen.
  An old man died long since, and no one trows
He gave an oak tree to his fellow men!

The carpenter has soon a word to say;
  Nor does his hammer strike the passing knell
Of service for the oak. When I survey
  My furniture, its shining boards compel
These thoughts I put on paper, just in case
The floor on which my restless footsteps pace,
  The table where I write, the chair I chose,
  Or any other friendly item, owes
Its presence here within my private den
  To one whose story in this sentence flows:
He gave an oak tree to his fellow men!

Envoy

  The frolic of an unknown stripling sows
  An acorn, and in time an oak tree grows
Whose wood to-day supports my tribute pen.
  He gave as royally as Nature strows –
He gave an oak tree to his fellow men!

MIDNIGHT SUN

(for N.)

DOROTHY UNA RATCLIFFE

Day speaks to day, my Belovéd, where Icelandic lichen grows;
At midnight hour the west becomes the ruby heart of a rose:
The eastern coasts and headlands turn amethyst, mauve, dove-blue;
A rainbow born at ebb of the tide, signals from me to you.

As the sun leans on the horizon, Time holds its golden breath;
The voice of a wind from an unknown airt whispers, 'There is no death.'
Then the sun ascends, a new day's born, and arrowy letters of flame
Fall on the wake of the waters proclaiming your name – your name.

INSCRIPTION ON THE FLYLEAF OF A BIBLE

(For my daughter)

DANNIE ABSE

I give you this bible and more to take.
Love is the work the hands of man can make.
So read what this, our fabled history teaches
and where, the fire-work, Imagination reaches
to dignify and sanctify.

So on the interior circuits do not miss
the vivid allegories you'll find in this.
The Pentateuch, Kings, Prophets – all will yield
signposts to guide you through the darkened field,
truths of piety and poetry.

Like Moses, avoid the gold and choose the coal
and see the pattern in the whole.
With the abandoned always side
and the loud and lonely crowd deride
who vilify and simplify.

Find valuable Job's elegance of distress,
David's winging gifts to praise. Such eloquence can bless
even wild soldiers on the barricade,
for the great visions are past but do not fade
and fortify and mollify.

YOUNG GIRL IN LOVE

MURIEL GRAINGER

Under my window stands Pierrot.
(Let no one listen. Let no one know.)
Locked in a box without a key
Are Browning's letters, inscribed to me.
Abelard breathed no secret word,
No passionate plea I have not heard.
You do not know that my heart is flame
Since one has spoken my inward name.
Take your choice; it is all of these –
Pierette: Elizabeth: Heloïse.

FROM 'THE ANIMAL DARK'

JON SILKIN

My dear, this is a letter to your head
Wherein I ask you back. I do not know

If ever your meaning was ever my meaning
But with these scriptural words cold as Jack Frost

I ask you back. In letters we may write
Only the half of language; so that when
I write the word 'love' and I place your word

Closely beside it, you may know by this
How actual the power of the shade
Which runs before me in the dusk. So I

Presage the lie of language which I make
And now send you a love crossed through the lines.
When you read this and with your mind work out
The meaning, its charge may race to your breast.

TO ADONIS, IN JANUARY

ROSAMUND STANHOPE

Now having, Lycon, evolved the ancient truths,
And having made a song of an old air,
Having formed a conviction, Aristus, like the old faiths,
From despair, which is the old despair;

Having childed, Ceres, with the same old spring,
And lost my childhood, Koré, with the ancient doubts,
I come again to the old discovering
Of the same new leaves that reward the same old shoots.

Having seen the same old branch grow gaunt in the sere,
Having held the infant leaf in its second spell,
All I can tell you, Adonis, is that spring is near
And the world is well.

THE SUBMERGED CATHEDRAL, SELSEY*

MARGARET STANLEY-WRENCH

This is the lane, they say. Deserted, lonely,
Grasses whisper in the wind, dipping their fringes,
The knopped clappers of the knapweed beat
Each on each like drumsticks. Clashing branches
Part to show the blue silk of the sea
Ravelled with white; sometimes its waves invade
The lane, and trample up it like herds of horses,
Leaving a stain of brown hoof-prints of weed.

Yet once, the peak and summit, crown of the avenue,
Crouched the cathedral, lifting a little spire
Like a shell, and roofed with shingle, set with stones
As if washed up by the tide. Nothing remains,
Not even the faint, dredged echo of the bells,
Or, harsh as tree trunks, broad as boles, the bulk
Of buttresses and pillars thick as thighs
In the acquous twilight, the trembling innocence

Of the wave, and the moon-green silences of the sea.
The tides have rubbed it, cancelled it out, and sucked it
Into the anonymity of water,
Ground it down, fretted it to sand,
Like a dream crumbling away at the touch of daylight.
Nothing is left: the cold touch of the tides
Hides stones once warm with sunlight, worn by human
Hands, and the fret and print of humble feet.

Driven back by the sea, did they abandon it
To the imperious congregation of water?
Did the waves come shyly, hesitating
Like children daring each other to go inside,
Then white and fresh as a bride, sweep up the aisle
Touching the pews with white, flecked froth of foam,
Flooding into the transepts like a glut of tourists?
And a chancel full of waters, a choir vibrating

* In 681 St. Wilfred landed at Selsey, and soon afterwards this became the site of the bishopric of Sussex. After the Norman Conquest, the cathedral was moved to Chichester, and legend has it that the remains of the old cathedral church of Selsey lie beneath the waves, several miles out at sea.

With the full swell of the sea praised the Lord
Who made the oceans and all that moved therein.
And swinging in the tower, dragged by their ropes of weed,
The great bells of waves roared through the rafters.
Then, like the sprawling carcase of a whale
Bone-white and dry it lay; around the eaves
Silver fish in shoals moved thick as swallows
Who brush with their dark blue wings our own warm roofs

Through the arched sockets of the shattered windows
Darted the mackerel, dappled, tabby as taffeta;
A confetti of sprats, a quicksilver smelting of herring
Flashed up the darkened nave, dipped past the altar
In living praise, their grace, their beauty worship,
And through the cloisters, with the quilted pace
Of old, old men, move sole, grey as the stone,
And the leopard plaice, flecked with bright marigold,

Meditating with the lidless stare
Of gargoyle and saint eroded by the sea.
Gone, it is gone. Not even the fisherman's ear
Hears the tidal swing of sunken bells.
Yet in men's minds like the memory of a dream
Haunting the day, the lost cathedral lies,
And they look up, their glance of love a prayer,
Seeing the shadow of that vanished spire.

MYCENAEAN TOMBS

D. G. DAVIES

Marvel, and look with awe; disastrous dooms
Brought base and noble to these royal tombs.

Aegisthus, Agamemnon, traitress Queen –
Little is here of all that they had been.

This belt that ringed the King with burning stones
Lies lapsed and loose around a wisp of bones.

Breathe from the bronze, the jewels, and the gold
Time's dust, and, see, they glitter as of old.

Three thousand years on axes, daggers, swords
Lie lightly, but you cannot rouse their lords.

CLOUDS OVER TEIGNMOUTH

GILBERT THOMAS

A cloudless day? No; not for me
Such glittering monotony.

Clouds hold the secret. Static lies
Loveliness under azure skies.
From my high window, as I look down
Over wooded slopes and red-roofed town,
How metal-blue the bay; defined
Too baldly the green cliffs that wind
Beneath a crystal cope, receding
Until – imagination needing
To conjure up infinity –
One glimpses now the open sea.
And, though tree-capped, hardly the less
Stark stands the terracotta Ness,
Guarding the estuary, whence –
No room this morning for pretence! –
A palpable coaster is emerging.
Fancy, in this broad light, needs urging
To roll back time and see again
The sails that struck at France and Spain,
Or, from this haven bellying forth,
Ranged the far waters of the North
For peaceful spoils – and tales to make
The rafters of the Quay Inn quake.

Nowhere has beauty more to give.
But hasten, clouds, and make it live!

The sun has but his simple ray.
Clouds are the true magicians: they
Sift light into a myriad hues,
Repaint the scene, and, as they choose,
Turn it around. Nonsense appear
Our footrules now of 'far' or 'near'.
Science may say we stand a mile
From shore. The poet-clouds just smile;
Toss the white surf beneath our eyes;
Or lift the sea until it lies
A lake – remote, serene.

At will
Clouds work some other miracle,
Whether they drift, shy twos and threes,
Or romp in buoyant companies;
Whether, in bright or sombre dresses,
They take the parting day's caresses;
Whether superbly the sea changes,
Mirroring now their Alpine ranges;
Or else, full charging to attack –
The challenged breakers answering back
With steel and purple, high-crested – they come
In pomp that staggers wonder – numb.
Then a rift in their ranks may show,
Where all was grim a moment ago;
And, leaping from fields of yellow-green
The darker acres in between,
A fanwise sweep of scarlet splendour
The dawn unearthlier may render.

Unearthly? Often shines for me
'The light that never was on sea
Or land.' The visionary gleam
No unreality may seem
When wind and weather blow their best
About my small town in the West,
Eclipsing art's sublimest crown,
Rebuking charlatan or clown.
While after novelty we run,
Nature abides, the many in one,
From central order drawing still
Resources inexhaustible
Of variegated mood and form.

In oils she now presents a storm:
Such riot of flame as makes a Turner
Himself seem but a gifted learner.
Again, with light no Cotman shows,
A living water-colour glows.
A pencil-sketch or woodcut next
Adorns the seasons' changing text.
Now, with my window for the frame,
I glance once more upon the same
Prospect to see how Nature will
(When minded) beat the engraver's skill,

Or, shaming the daintiest studio print,
Herself produce an aquatint.

But for her magic she depends
On clouds . . . on clouds. Fie to you, friends,
Who, coming here on holiday,
So curtly wish the clouds away!

Premium Prize Poem

LAMENT AND REPLY

ELIZABETH CLUER

Nightingale and swan
have gone beyond the dark
horizon, kestrel and lark
gone, and the eagle's wingspread
gone out of my head
and sparrows chitter on a tame pavement.

Small town talk
fritters the air of my exile
small and empty words
fill my arid mind:
I have lost the power of the wind
swooping upon the mountain
and O the hawk of the mind
is tame and learns to talk.

The mind is tame, but the flesh
sweetly to wildness grows
and from the mind's decrease
puts forth the night-blossoming rose
that O so gaily blows
from wild to ripeness' ease.

And now the theme is reversed:
out of the thorny dark
where the wild rose has rooted
rises again the lark
petals to wings commuted
scent blossoming into song;
and like the wren from the eagle's
wingspread the mind soars higher,
rose into phoenix-fire,
phoenix and rose being one.

THE POETRY OF RICHARD CHURCH

LEO ROBERTSON

A critical assessment of Richard Church's literary work is not the purpose of this article, for with a writer so prolific this would be a disproportionate task within its narrow limits.

His latest book is in prose, and autobiographical.* But it is a convenient starting-point for an appreciation of his varied achievements, for a writer's work, more especially his poetry, cannot be dissociated from the man himself. *Over the Bridge* is written with such regard for the truth, that merely in the manner of his story he reveals his grace of mind and courtesy of spirit, qualities which do not exhibit a mere aspect of the man but are the very tone and colour of his being.

This vivid chronicle of his life in a humble Battersea home during the transition of the Victorian into the Edwardian era takes us no further than his eighteenth year when his mother died. But in the retrospect of his childhood and adolescence the author provides as it were a skeleton-key to some of the secret places in the many-chambered house of poetry and imaginative prose literature created by his maturer self. His own development is traced as it was conditioned both by external circumstances and by the subtle ties which weave the lives of the members of a small growing family into relations of interdependence. We are given portraits of his father, a boisterously good-natured, easy-going clerk in the Postal Service; his elder brother, Jack, whose odd temperament may be accounted for by the fact of his being a musical prodigy; and his mother, a courageous, high-souled, and intuitively intelligent being, whose strength of character held the little family together, and whose rich personality not only lent colour to the drabness of life on the narrowest of means but was for her husband and sons an unfailing source of moral refreshment in the weaker moments of the spirit. Her death in his eighteenth year marked the end of a definite phase of his life, and brings the book to a fitting close.

Over the Bridge is the work of a born poet, of one who dedicated himself to poetry as a mere boy. Richard Church has noted the very day and hour and all the circumstances connected with the cataclysmic revelation for him of the true significance of poetry, of the fact that it was the very reality of life. Psychologically this event in his life belongs to the order of authentic mystical experiences, and like them was preceded by a long period of spiritual dolour, no doubt something akin to 'the dark night of the soul' of which the religious mystics speak. It would be as well to note here that although this experience was indubitably mystical, the poems themselves are not mystical. Though in

* *Over the Bridge*: an Essay in Autobiography, by Richard Church (Heinemann, 18s.).

a sense mysticism lies at the heart of all poetry, the distinction between poetic insight or intuition and mystical illumination should be preserved. The mystic's vision is of the one divine reality underlying all diversity, while the poet (except when a mystical experience is actually the subject of his poem) is concerned with reality in its infinite diversity.

But whereas to the crassly prosaic mind things are what they are as materially presented, the poet makes us realize that we cannot rest with this literal aspect of things. It is not surprising that Richard Church, endowed with intensity of feeling, deep poetic insight, and a rare gift of felicitous expression, should seldom fail in his poems to reveal something of the magic light radiating from the deep soul of things. Reading his poems we are graced by an expressiveness behind the features of life and nature never discerned by us except on the rare occasions when the moment is deepened with a meaning beyond articulate utterance.

Since the day when it flashed on him that he was destined to be a poet, Richard Church has produced book after book of verse with such assured mastery of his medium that, except, quite understandably, in some of his juvenile productions, he never falls flat even in poems in which the intended meaning is imperfectly embodied. *The Flood of Life, Hurricane,* and *Philip,* were early publications, the last in 1923. Between 1926 and 1930 came a succession of maturer works, including the long narrative in blank verse, *The Portrait of the Abbot,* individual in style though reminiscent of Browning in choice of theme and treatment, and *Mood Without Measure,* a group of poems in free verse, not his happiest medium, the discipline of metre and rhyme seeming to be a necessary stimulus for his best creative effort at that stage of his development. *The Dream, Theme with Variations,* and *The Glance Backward* are collections of poems astonishingly varied in mood, theme, and form, yet embraced in one single pattern created by the poet's intense awareness of a spiritual life-principle behind art's representations of life.

With *News from the Mountain* (1932) and *Twelve Noon* (1936) Richard Church reached a high level of inspiration and technical skill which is sustained in *The Solitary Man* (1941), *Twentieth-Century Psalter* (1943), and the long, dramatic narrative, *The Lamp* (1946), a sequence of poems in varying measures, framing afresh the legend of Eros and Psyche in the modern setting of France during the German occupation. *The Collected Poems* appeared in 1948, since when his contributions to the literary periodicals have grown sufficiently in number for another rich harvesting of finely-wrought verse.

Richard Church is primarily a lyric poet, and one of his achievements as such is his ability to keep his poems in strong-pulsing, soaring flight even when weighted with thought. His advance as a poet has

been in the direction of the more meditative type of verse which he is able to produce without any sacrifice of the melody and grace that have characterized his poetry from the beginning. In tracing his development we realize what a far cry it is from some of the poems written between 1920 and 1930 to the introspective verse of *Walking Alone*, or to the reflective poems in *The Lamp* and *Twentieth-Century Psalter*.

That for over forty years he has been writing poetry of depth and spirit and in command of word-harmony prompts us to ask in what the secret lies of this steady and exuberant flow. It calls for no great familiarity with his work to find the explanation: he is a man of faith. For, unquestionably, it is faith which nourishes his soul, and from which it takes its complexion. It is apparent in all his work, and stands in no need of the evidence of his own direct references to it in his autobiography and in some of his poems, notably in the *Twentieth-Century Psalter*, in which his cry of faith rises triumphant from despair:

> Yes, here, where disaster has been,
> And a day's events remove
> What men have laboured for so long,
> I will look beyond the frail
> Ruins of a century's betrayal;
> I will sing a new song.

One of the main characteristics of his writing is its lucidity, a quality which though reflecting the natural candour of his mind was also cultivated by him from the days of his literary apprenticeship. His consistency in not allowing the idiosyncracies or eccentricities of fashion or caprice to affect his clarity of style has led many of the self-constituted *avant-garde* to regard him as a 'traditional' poet in the derogatory sense of being outmoded, or as a late Georgian, or at any rate not a modernist. But what precisely is modern poetry? Even T. S. Eliot, the arch-modernist, in his preface to Anne Ridler's *A Little Book of Modern Verse*, gives but a vague, stuttering, and question-begging answer conspicuous for its lack of enlightenment, for he concludes that 'an explanation of what makes modern poetry would have to be an explanation of the whole modern world'. Nothing less than that, if you please!

Richard Church is certainly not in the prevailing fashion if this implies an indulgence in obscurities of language resulting from the use of recondite and perplexing allusions, of loose, ambiguous syntax, of a symbolism that is purely private and personal, and of violently incongruous metaphors, all these shock tactics ill-concealing a certain paucity and aridity of thought. But most of the poems written by him in the last twenty years may be cited as evidence of his essential modernity

both in outlook and in idiom. The criticism, therefore, which adopts a superior attitude towards him as outdated may be ignored.

He began to write fiction some years after his reputation as a poet had been established, but he did not turn a tired or a disloyal back on poetry for novels. The flood of his inspiration was not diverted into an alien channel. There was, so to speak, simply a broadening of the original stream to include prose-fiction as well as poetry. As a novelist, and in his novels, he still remains a poet, a statement which will be better understood in the light of his own view of the relationship between these apparently disparate arts employing different media of expression. The novel for him, as he states in his critical study, *The Growth of the English Novel*, is 'fundamentally an aspect of poetry, a process of the imagination of man working through imagery and not through logic to a presentation of himself and the world of which he is a part'. He not only traces the genesis of all fiction to poetry, but holds that poetry is the life-blood of the novel, and that no great examples of this art are devoid of poetic sensibility and vision even though their authors – he instances Dickens, Trollope, Bennett, and Wells – may have had no faculty for verse. This may appear to be too sweeping a generalization, but not if we accept the broader, which is also the deeper, sense of the term *poetry* in which it is used by Richard Church, who is surely not to be accounted a mere theorist. In this context his usage of the term is a return to its original meaning, poiesis, *making*, or *work*, in this case of the creative imagination.

He followed up his first venture into fiction, *Oliver's Daughter* (1930), a book of quiet charm, with three others, *High Summer* (1931), *The Prodigal Father* (1933), and *The Apple of Discord* (1933), all of them in design, treatment, and feeling, the work of a poet. In 1937 came *The Porch*, winner of the Femina Vie Heureuse Prize, and the first of a remarkable trilogy. Through the web of emotion and events in which its central characters are involved we are shown, from within, the inner workings of the bureaucratic machine of the Civil Service. We learn, as the quixotic hero John Quickshott did, that this Leviathan is not altogether a monstrous, soul-destroying robot, but that it has a heartbeat of its own. The book takes us into the interior of a poet's mind, for in Mouncer, a somewhat Barbellion-like figure, we have an intimate study of a physically and spiritually tormented young aspirant to poetic honours who died before his promise was fulfilled.

Richard Church spent twenty-four years of his life in the Civil Service. Happily for us he then abandoned it to devote himself entirely to literature. Happily too, though he is now in his early sixties, his poetic energy shows no signs of flagging. The joy of song is in his heart, and long may it continue for our delight to find expression in the voice of a master-singer.

EPIGRAM

EDITHA M. KELLY

We master Everest, pierce depths profound
With radar eye, burst barrier of sound,
But humbly mark the limits of man's power, –
The frozen sparrow and the withered flower.

CAILLEACH AN DUDAIN

J. F. HENDRY

Loneliness shines round her like a light
And all her steps are choruses of songs.
He who could not bear to walk with one so bright
In Salen, when there were so many wrongs
Borne on a marble wind for him to right,
Washed his face in the rays of the setting sun
Among a pride of starlings on a flight,
As, in fermented milk, once Mary washed Her Son,
And wrestles the engine of robbery for her kingdom
Till the hosts of Tomnahurich come.

She passes the spell of seals on Skerryvore
Bearing a creel of stones that make her bow.
She guards the sharp pillars of her door
Lest the good folk sweep her under the plough.
She grows like the rushes. She withers like the fern
Till the winds curse the people from a stone,
For the eyes of a goat in the face of a lass overturn
Ships and kingdoms none can ever own,
Or will great eddies in the sea of men whose creed
Is childhood gray, where no son may succeed.

Sometimes in the wolf-month she hears his whistle
As he throws his knife into the whirlwind,
Or sees the Clan of the Cat, whose badge is the thistle,
A people jealous of a puff of wind,
Shouting 'Is leatsa so, is leatsa sin!'*
And, wringing her country's plaid in Corryvreckan,
At the base of the eagle's rock, or a withered whin,
She casts her folly into a night of wreck
Till men lie tense beneath her wand of frost,
And, travelling on tall grass stems, her love is lost.

*This is yours: that's mine! – old Gaelic saying, to placate the spirit of Corryvreckan.

**The above poem is third Prize Winner in the Lilian Bowes Lyon Competition (see last issue).

THE TRIUMPH OF BACCHUS AND ARIADNE

Carnival Verses by Lorenzo' de Medici

KENNETH HARE

Fair is youth though fleeting ever;
Fair the fleeting flowering season;
Not to frolic now were treason;
For to-morrow: trust it never!

Ariadne leaves her weeping –
Since Time flies and all is over –
Has her Bacchus' heart in keeping;
Tranced they live now, lover and lover;
Nymphs and folks that tall trees cover,
Blithe they are and shall be ever;
Not to frolic now were treason;
For to-morrow: trust it never!

Satyr-boys, this time of mating,
Amorous of the wood-nymphs' graces,
Ambush them and lie in waiting
In grots, groves, and such-like places;
To spare the wine-cup none so base is:
Then for capering, dancing ever!
Not to frolic now were treason;
For to-morrow: trust it never!

All these merry nymphs are minded
By their fauns to be deluded;
None 'scapes Love – unless some hind did,
Boor! from courtesy excluded –
In grassy dale now, richly wooded,
Feast they as they meant to ever!
Not to frolic now were treason;
For to-morrow: trust it never! . . .

Hark! he whispers; think, 'Time passes';
Lend your ears, Girl, and be jolly;
Old wives, patriarchs, lads and lasses,
Give a loud All Hail to Folly!
Hence with curséd melancholy,
Let us keep it up for ever!
Not to frolic now were treason;
For to-morrow: trust it never!

Gentle Ladies, fresh young lovers,
Love and Bacchus seek your praises;
Let each soul the blue sky covers,
Pipe, sing, thread the dance's mazes!
Not for toil this day of days is!
Warm your hearts: you'll cheat Fate never!
Trust to-morrow not: 'tis treason;
Oh! how fair the flowering season;
Youth how fair, but fleeting ever!

LIKE A STAR-SKY POOL . . .

C. RAJU

Like a star-sky pool
Hidden in the depths
Of a Himalayan forest
I live in this abbey
Dark, and scented
By the Neem and Asoka trees;

Like the star-meshed face
Of the pale blue sky
Arching on this beloved earth,
My humble countenance
Droops on a sigh.
I am rocked to sleep
By a strange lullaby.

PUERTO DEL VINO

CHARLES HIGHAM

Wine, heart of harvest, burn
Like a still red wave in the glass,
Or, like a folded rose, gather the scent,
Forever, in some hidden vase,
Adorable and innocent.

For, in this haunted goblet, we
Can gaze upon your spell of joy,
Your dark mysterious potency,
And dream awhile of the deep sea,
Beyond your red and burning sky –

Dream, and die.

THE ESSENTIAL BEING: LAURIE LEE

JOHN SMITH

The artist in our time is bedevilled by critics who are happier pointing out faults than praising virtues. It is perhaps the poet who suffers most and especially the poet of 'minor' talent and sensibility. In so inhospitable a world the still small flame of poetry has a difficult task to keep alight, constantly buffeted by the howling gale of intellectual criticism. It still gets written for all that, and by a surprising number of people. It gets written, without doubt, by Laurie Lee.

Laurie Lee, whether we think him minor or major, is undoubtedly the real thing: a born poet. His work may not be world shaking, may not alter the 'poetic sensibility' of the time, may not provoke the reader to profound speculative thought on the nature of man and the universe, but at least it is the product of a person who is, by nature one might say, a poet. His work is not fragments of an academic thesis re-hashed into the shape of contemporary verse. In a world where toughness is all he is mellifluous; where it is fashionable to carp and cavil, he sings.

These thoughts are prompted by the publication of his third collection of poems, but rather than review this slight volume of fifteen pieces it seemed sensible to take the opportunity of commenting, however briefly, on his two earlier books as well.* The Hogarth volume is fairly substantial and shows a poet of vibrant sensitivity with a startling vision of the world, glittering, somewhat terrifying and often bizarre. The language, sharp and cutting, occasionally topples over the edge into a disturbing hysteria. But through it all the country burns and from a reading of these pages one turns away with a different eye with which to look at Nature. These poems reshuffle the beauty of the natural world. The fierce sun strikes up from the pages, the green grass insinuates tongues of subtle fire into the lethargic mind. The reader is stung by countless midges of beauty. Certain poems remain in the memory fresh and distinct among the clutter that accumulates from a reading of so much contemporary verse: 'Milkmaid', 'Juniper', 'Village of Winter Carols'. A brief taste must suffice to give the special flavour: the opening of the last named.

> Village of winter carols
> and gawdy spinning tops
> of green-handed walnuts
> and games in the moon.

**My Many-coated Man* (Deutsch, 6s.); *The Sun my Monument* (Hogarth Press); *The Bloom of Candles* (John Lehmann).

The Sun My Monument came out in 1944. Three years later John Lehmann published *The Bloom of Candles,* a beautifully produced booklet of twelve poems only, but twelve among which are to be found some of the loveliest pure lyrics of the last twenty-five years. It is difficult to imagine any reader failing to respond to the astonishing loveliness of 'April Rise', 'First Love', 'Field of Autumn', 'Summer Rain' and 'The Bloom of Candles' itself. Space will allow me to quote only the last two verses of 'Field of Autumn':

> Each bird and stone, each roof and well,
> feels the gold foot of autumn pass;
> each spider binds with glittering snare
> the splintered bones of grass.
>
> Slow moves the hour that sucks our life,
> slow drops the late wasp from the flower,
> the rose tree's thread of scent draws thin –
> and snaps upon the air.

Like the first book, this second collection reveals a certain wilfulness of imagery not always justified in the context of the particular poem; language being strained until it breaks. For at times Laurie Lee's vision is almost too personal, too remote, so that the ordinary reader smiles at a language that seems always to strive after the exotic phrase, the startling simile. It is difficult not to laugh at the girls whose white teeth are 'sweeter than cucumbers'. But the poetry is fresh enough to make it good-natured laughter.

We have had to wait eight years for the third collection, all short lyrics and very personal; poems that only Laurie Lee could have written. Perhaps the astonishing loveliness of the best poems in *The Bloom of Candles* makes us expect too much, but it is, I think, true to say that *My Many-coated Man* lacks the especial distinction and quality of that previous slight collection. Beauty nevertheless abounds. The trouble, perhaps, is that too many of these new poems are merely descriptive and do not have running through them that curious thread that in the earlier book made Nature a part of the poet as this poet always seems a part of nature. In a poem like 'Sunken Evening' we are charmed and delighted by the pretty conceits, but not properly moved as the purest lyric poetry can move us:

> The green light floods the city square –
> A sea of fowl and feathered fish,
> Where squalls of rainbirds dive and splash
> And gusty sparrows chop the air.

This is more quaint recording than true vision, though it is still good. But in 'Apples', 'The Abandoned Shade', 'Boy in Ice', the old fusion is revealed and description is caught up and held in statements

that contain philosophy without being philosophical. We can see through all these poems the poet at work here: the essential, unpredictable, uncomprehensible, inexplicable being. In a world of big poetic guns of any century, the Yeats, Eliots, Wordsworths, Miltons, Laurie Lee, you may say, is small fry. But he is surely among the minor lyric-writers in our tongue. The reader who responds to the anonymous fifteenth-century poets, to Wyatt, Sidney, Herrick and the host of other 'silver poets' as Gerald Bullet would call them must surely take pleasure in Laurie Lee. There is still a place for the singing voice. If you care for lyric poetry at all, I must urge you not to put down this brief notice merely with a mental note to remember the name. His books are cheap. Go out and buy them. Have them on your shelves.

I, NARCISSUS

MICHAEL IVENS

I, Narcissus,
An unsober youth,
Maudlin with the splendour of limbs
Shimmering from the wine-cupped
Noon-intoxicated pool
Am twice a ghost.

Nymph-resisting I died,
Echoing self
And rejecting
Echo for self's shadow.

Then as white
And yellow-centred flower
I faded deep into the weeds at the water's edge.

For centuries
The wind that blew about the tangled pool
Knew me as the ghost of man and flower,
A ghost
Old with the centuries' wisdom.

But substance was sorely missed
By a ghost craving an image
And sighing for the decisive form of tears.
But wisdom came
Even as the years passed
Slowly.

Thus, I, Narcissus,
An ancient ghost
Learned lesson of Nemesis;
Now kneeling insubstantially I see
Not my shade's shadow
Nor the trees tremoring on the surface of the pool,
But keen-eyed with my wisdom, glimpse
The glories of Zeus
Dazzling through the darkness of the water.

THE TRACK

CELIA RANDALL

To the grey place of thistles
Came my love down the furzy way,
I minding the mountain heifers
Lest a wild one stray.

Over the ridge of the hare's gap
Came my love with her golden head,
As the down from the seeding thistles
So light was her tread.

Soft as the nose of a yearling
In mine her warm hand lay,
And my heart leaped up as a young colt leaps
To the light of day.

IN GRATITUDE

(written for a visitors' book)

KATHARINE KENDALL

When time ticks ruthlessly upon its way
and when to-morrow is to-day
(the while life claims me back to play my part)
let memory inform my heart
how courage new is born of peace and leisure,
of generous kindness given without measure;
let me recall the happy healing hours
with books, with home-made fare, new-gathered flowers.
My thanks, too deep, unspoken must remain –
until to-morrow brings to-day again.

AFRICAN CHILD

PHILLIPPA BERLYN

My child is dark as the midnight bird
With passing wings that curve in an arc.
Loud is his cry and his cry is unheard
For his eyes see only the moon and the dark.

I gave him a gift and my gift was his birth.
The white child glows like the sun at noon.
He is the star, my child is the earth
Whose eyes see only the dark of the moon.

I have a new gift for my crying child.
My gift is the blade of a dagger bright
That will still his sobs and his weeping wild,
And close his eyes to the dark and the night.

COASTLINE

BRYAN A. REED

Snaky waiting pastures wake a painting
From a silken scene with seabirds criss-cross
Swooping swiftsure, gracious, tilting
At the windmills in the pitch-and-toss
Gaming of the sea. The tears
Of rain wash down the scarred cliff faces
To sea-scored beaches measuring the years
In sanded traces.

Bucket castles built from daydreams litter
In my memory, frail around the bay
Born in boyhood. Waves that glitter
Curve in crumbling crescent, sweep to spray –
Splashed rocks that wear their coats of soaking weed
Like smooth fur, break and, foaming, roar
In the caves, claw and scrabble in their greed,
And share the shore no more.

From the beach a road crawls resolute, and
As if it fears the hungry chewing of the tide
Speeds its metal trail, and climbs the steepening land.

Fingers of the wind will play with pride,
Smoothing lines from tumbling stone
That now leaps back to bird-white mushroom top,
Or smooth and black-humped back or pointed cone,
To watch in fear the drop.

A light breeze, moisture-locked, sets thistledown flavours
Sighing through the fern and fraying heather;
Night's rider nears, the light fast wavers
And dies, leaving only sound and taste of weather.

'PHŒBE'

C. DENIS PEGGE

The wall-flower stands yet
On a few withering stems.
The death of this russet flower
Signs the height of the summer.
So you with your pale face
And crest of reddish hair
Sweetly for me emblazon
The fulness of my season.

THE GLADIATOR

T. B. ROWAN

This cool and solid stone blanches my heart.
Familiar your rough kiss upon my hand;
Though hard and gray you have an honest part,
Not smiling and deceitful like the sand.
Blest arch of shade; the afternoon outside
Stands on the plaza like a pagan god
Who, pitiless and golden in his pride,
Leans with indifference upon his rod.
In what dark vineyard was the harvest won;
What darker vats could bear that monstrous flood
Whose fumes could raise this monster in the sun
Calling across the yellow sand for blood?
The vine is withered and the olive gone;
All life is shrinking flesh, the world a stone.

'I REMEMBER –'

"THE POEM THAT INFLUENCED ME"

Here is the final selection of little essays contributed by readers to the Symposium in which is recalled the first poem or poet with a dominant influence on them. The send-off to the series was given by ten poets of distinction, an impressive factor which they shared in common being their gratitude and devotion to the Old Masters of English poetry. For another (£100) contest for readers, see next issue.

'R.L.S.' WAS THE FIRST

I was seven when, in starched frock, with hair painfully corkscrewed, I left my Wold home to participate in our village concert. For reciting 'Foreign Lands' my immediate reward was an extra Saturday penny; my lasting recompense, awareness.

Boarding school, generous with porridge and syrup, provided poetry too. On stiff cards with marginal notes were Byron's 'Prisoner of Chillon', Longfellow's 'Building of the Ship' and other cherished poems. The untimely death of the schoolgirls' idol, Rupert Brooke, brought 'Grantchester' and 'The Great Lover' to light, and to love.

But Robert Louis Stevenson was the *first* to influence me. And for half a century the 'dimpling river' has been to me 'the sun's blue looking-glass'.

MARY PARKES

THE MALADY OF THE IDEAL

I was born where the Mourne Mountains stand like graded sentinels along the horizon of Downshire. Hills are in the fabric of me. I love poets for whom 'mountains are a feeling' and remembrance of mountains keening at the gates of the heart in flat country – each lonely crease the mother of a stream, each granite stone the kernel of a dream. Mourne is my praying ground – the footstool of God.

As a child, to see 'day stand tip-toe on the misty mountain top', as Shakespeare did, set me wishing to write, but expression came later when experience brought home the poignancy of:

> how love fled
> And paced upon the mountains overhead
> And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

A love that was lost among cloud-mountains is powerfully near when one travels by air. I am debtor to Yeats, and the malady of the ideal is also mine.

M. E. MILLEN

A MAGAZINE POEM BEGAN IT

Chaucer to Lawrence, Shakespeare to Mary Webb – I love 'em all. My contributions to the school magazine smacked strongly of Keats,

Thomas Hood made such an impression that I was in trouble over a dreadful rash of parodies, each more cynical than the last, which persisted after I left school; but the poem which really set me writing seriously was an unwieldy effusion in a reputable magazine. I said to myself: 'I can do better than that,' – and, humbly and sincerely, I will.

MARGUERITE MUNSON

PERILOUS SEAS AND FAERY LANDS

Of all the great poets read at school – Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth, Browning, Shakespeare – I think it was Keats with his 'perilous seas in faery lands forlorn' who first made me catch my breath in wonder. Then Shelley – 'the leaves dead are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing, yellow and black and pale and hectic red.' And from Shakespeare 'Out, out, brief candle. Life's but a walking shadow' – how wild, desolate and sad. In those dreary war-years, in the services that followed school the sanity of these poets was a beacon in a howling wilderness.

HESTER KAY

THANKS TO A FRIEND OF POETS

At ten years old I began life at a public school memorizing *The Lays of Ancient Rome*. Next, a discerning master taught spelling by a wide selection of poetry, grave and gay (especially Calverley!). Shakespeare was exquisitely taught, and Chaucer. Classics helped, of course, and the Cambridge Classical Tripos involved happy hunting with all the metres of Greece and Rome, the thunder of Lucretius, the music of Homer and Vergil, the snap of Catullus.

But it was the winter of 1917–18 that set me writing. We were in tents before Péronne, in the snow, and the war stagnated. I secured Everyman editions of the poets: inhaled Tennyson's blank verse: began to write it myself. After Armistice Mrs. Charles Brookfield, friend and descendant of poets, encouraged my fledgling verse. Now it is a latch-key into the hearts of my friends.

AMBROSE AGIUS

FESTUS AND CHILDE HAROLD

As a young man I was advised by a relation to read her well-marked copies of Bailey's *Festus* and Byron's *Childe Harold*, both of which greatly impressed me. As I had long wished to be able to express myself in verse, especially so about Nature, I carefully read through the poetry of the great, and some anthologies, notably Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* - and found I chiefly liked Byron, Spenser, Keats, and Milton. Shelley's unsurpassable lyrics, Wordsworth's sonnets, and Coleridge's imaginative poems. Subsequently I read Tennyson – surely one of our greatest *singers* – and that musician in words, Swinburne; also Browning and others. E. A. Poe and Bryant also held their spell, especially Poe.

ARTHUR STROVER

DUSK ON WINDERMERE

P. MACQUEEN

Quiet branches, laced against the darkening light;
The steel-grey waters, glistening like a tear;
Low on the hills, the folded lids of night,
And I stand silent, finding heaven here.

Yet one last bird-call lingers on the air;
Under my feet the brittle branches crack;
Shattering the silvered stillness of the mere
The wild grouse cries: *Go back, go back – go back*!

LAUS DEO

TERESA HOOLEY

Of Earth were born the flowers, cloud-white, feather-star-rayed,
Shining on the altar.
Air, fragrant, quiet, encompassed them,
One with the benison of many-coloured light
Falling through the eastern window.
Water sustained them,
Held in the amphora either side of the cross.
Fire played upon them
From the little heart-shaped flames of the holy candles.

The humble church worshipped,
Full-filled with the Universe, the elements of the universe and the Creator thereof:
God was broken and poured in food finite yet everlasting.

Blood of Wine in my veins,
Body of Bread on my lips,
I knelt by my neighbour in love and thanksgiving:
Holy, Holy, Holy,
Lord God of hosts,
Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory;
Glory be to Thee,
O Lord Most High.

Amen.

NORTH SEA

DIARMAID CAMPBELL

This sea is like an old, sweet book of song,
Its ragged pages turning, turning waves;
Singing of sailors' wakes and reeking strong
Of fish and salt and fathomed water-graves.

Pages illumined with the prows of ships
And twisting seabirds from the northern isles,
Its songs were roared by foreign warrior lips
Who read this book that sings for miles and miles.

Their singing was the deeds and deaths of these;
See hang the tatters of their seaweed hair
On rock and shingle, on the roots of trees!
Was ever book so burning and so fair?

I WOULD HOLD APRIL

DAPHNE DIMSEY

I would hold April
And keep her for ever in green bud,
With paired birds winging to the new-knit nest,
And skylark singing o'er the meadow home
Where myriad flowers show white and yellow stars,
And cherry blossom falls.

I would keep Youth
With rounded cheek and silken lashes' sweep;
Lips full and firm, vigorous hair on fire,
Limbs swift and sure, tireless as the tide:
Youth full of laughter, but with strong intent;
Yet quick to blush.

But Age is known to me,
And deeper vision comes with failing sight.
April's roots drink from December's snows.
Fair is more fair for her elusive grace
And we would weary of the permanent.
We hold the hour within inanimate Art
While Destiny moves on.

TO THE PUBLISHERS OF THE FIRST FOLIO

HOWARD PARSONS

Though I have delved for long in Shakespeare's plays,
I pray that yet awhile the task be mine
To wake the sleeping beauty of the line
Laid prone in print corrupt in far-off days:
To trace the progress of his high design
And lead the baffled critics through the maze
That kept the poet's meaning in a haze
And robbed his polished phrases of their shine.
John Heminge, Henry Condell, these your names
Upon the Abbey walls should be engraved.
So much resulted from your worthy aims,
So much, before your work was done, you braved.
That tribute is your due, this fact proclaims –
It was by you most of his plays were saved.

WORTHY OF THE NAME

J. H. WARD

In space incomprehensible and deep,
Where worlds on worlds their rhythmic courses keep,
And suns on suns terrific blaze their way –
What boots the earth and Man's swift passing day?

And yet we know this puny creature may
In thought and by imagination's play
Project his spirit, break his earthly bars
And, godlike, reach the freedom of the stars.

Grand, ever grander is his visioning,
He hears the hills and vales of heaven laugh and sing,
Enraptured, holds the song's immortal strain,
And, down to earth, men hear it surge again –

Working through harmonies to make Truth known,
Translating beauty from the Eternal's throne,
Voicing the mystery in which we move . . .
So do we share the loveliness of love.

And, ever round us, burns the sacred flame
Of human greatness worthy of the name.

THE POET, THE SAINT AND THE MODERN WORLD

STUART HOLROYD

II

Poetry, religion, philosophy: these are terms not easily definable without reference to each other. The true poet was ever a religious man and the questions to which religion seeks to provide answers have been the concern of all significant thinkers. Probably religion is most fundamental of the three, and beyond and responsible for it is man's sense of mystery, his intuitive awareness of the ineffable, his feeling for the rhythm and the unity of the world and his desire to become a part of it. These movements in the heart and mind of man are the root cause of the phenomena we call religion, poetry and philosophy; and each of these phenomena has its immediate cause in bewilderment, praise and cerebration, three progressive stages in the development of the human consciousness.

In the *Duino Elegies* by Rainer Maria Rilke, and the *Four Quartets* by T. S. Eliot, these three latter processes are seen at work. Both Rilke and Eliot are profoundly religious, and these works of their maturity are among the outstanding religious poetry of the present century. We have already seen that their beliefs are very different. Rilke, though he had been brought up within the orthodox church, soon rejected Christianity, for he was a man with an intensely personal vision to whom the Church seemed but an obstacle to man's communion with his God. In the series of poems *The Life of the Virgin Mary*, Mary is a somewhat pale figure, as remote from life as Rilke was himself. She is not divine as the Virgin Mother of the Roman Catholic faith was divine, nor is she entirely human. For Rilke she was simply a symbol of purity, nothing more. But when Rilke reached the fullness of his thought he could not find within Christianity symbols adequate for its expression. The great symbol of the Angel in the *Duino Elegies* is not, he insists, to be understood in the Christian sense. Mr. Eliot, on the other hand, accepted the Christian faith piecemeal, finding that his personal vision could be contained within its concepts and expressed in its terms. In the *Four Quartets* he gives the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation a deeper significance than it had previously possessed, seeing it as 'the point of intersection of the timeless with time':

> The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation.
> Here the impossible union
> Of spheres of existence is actual,
> Here the past and future
> Are conquered, and reconciled.

We are not concerned here with judgements. Each poet has his supporters and his detractors, and the standards according to which these evaluations are formed are separate, irreconcilable, and equally valid. The Catholic will prefer Eliot, the individualist Rilke, but by predilection only, for there is no measuring rod against which we can assess the quality of two poets of such stature.

The important difference between the mystic and the orthodox poet is that the former has a direct, first-hand religious experience which he is compelled to communicate, whereas the latter is concerned rather with giving new significance to doctrine which has been evolved from past experience. To express this difference in the poets we are considering it is sufficient to remember that the *Duino Elegies* were written in a storm of creative activity in February, 1922, and that Rilke always believed that they were 'given' to him and was thankful for being so favoured. One feels on reading *Four Quartets*, however, that any compulsion connected with their coming into existence must have been exercised by the poet. T. S. Eliot did not feel impelled by forces outside himself to write his poem, but rather sought within himself the answers to problems which he felt were important for his own and the world's salvation. The result was a poem in which beauty of language, sensitiveness and nobility of thought combine. But still we feel that Mr. Eliot is not a man of natural faith, but rather a man who, knowing the importance of faith to the poet, has compelled himself to believe. Rilke's religious feeling was instinctive, that of Mr. Eliot is an intellectual accomplishment.

I am simply stating facts. I do not wish to appear to be levelling a criticism, for that which is beyond art is in my view beyond criticism also. Blake's doors of perception are not opened equally wide to all poets; indeed to some they are not opened at all. Even to the mind of Shakespeare the thought of his near contemporaries Thomas Traherne and Jacob Boehme would have been quite foreign.

But the mystic is not necessarily at an advantage over the poet whose visionary powers are less intense. Intensity of vision is usually accompanied by incompleteness. The mystical poet may express poignantly a part of the truth, but unless we can ourselves supply the other parts we run the risk of taking him at his own valuation, which is fatal. In mystical writings there is much beauty and much wisdom and the reader who is capable of placing them in a right perspective may thereby be initiated into realms of exalted thought and spiritual experience which are closed to all but a few.

I have already said that of the two Rilke is the more purely a poet. Mr. Eliot is of quite a different order, having more in common with the saints than with any other poet. Never has he written poetry for

its own sake. He has repeatedly had to convince himself and his readers of 'The Use of Poetry', to quote part of the title of one of his essays. Now most poets give little thought to whether their work serves any useful purpose or not, and the fact that Mr. Eliot is perpetually concerned with this problem must turn our attention to a consideration of the 'usefulness' of his own poetical productions. If we do this we shall find that they have quite a definite purpose, namely the recording of the progressive phases in the spiritual life of the poet. And these phases correspond closely to those recorded in the lives of acknowledged saints.

The saint is rarely a lovable or a loving man. He is austere, and neither persons nor things engage his affections. Very often he starts by hating mankind. This is, in fact, where Mr. Eliot began. His early poems are full of what Dr. Schweitzer calls 'world- and life-negation'. The ineffectual Alfred J. Prufrock, the affected, shallow-minded lady in *Portrait of a Lady*, the vulgar Sweeney Agonistes: these are all symbols of what the poet most hates in a world where everything appears despicable. His hatred of his fellow-men at this time was almost as bitter as Swift's. Indeed the Dean of St. Patrick's was hardly more contemptuous than Mr. Eliot in this description of 'apeneck Sweeney':

> This withered root of knots of hair
> Slitted below and gashed with eyes,
> This oval O cropped out with teeth:
> The sickle motion from the thighs
>
> Jackknifes upward at the knees
> Then straightens out from heel to hip
> Pushing the framework of the bed
> And clawing at the pillow slip.

Such hatred of the human race leads eventually to the question, Where would I be without them? If men and all their stupid institutions were suddenly wiped from the face of the earth, if I were completely alone in the universe, would I be sufficient unto myself? This question Mr. Eliot faced in 'Gerontion', the poem which ends with words which are its own criticism: 'Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season.' World-hatred attended by the realization that one could not do without the world leads to self-hatred, hatred of one's insufficiency and hatred of the body which is the spirit's distraction. At this stage the concept *God* forces itself upon the saint's mind. He may call it the Supreme Being, the Absolute, Buddha, Allah, Tao. It does not matter: all these terms are used to designate that something which is apparently beyond man, which makes him complete and in the company of which he can stand unafraid in the Universe.

In 'Gerontion' Mr. Eliot had declared:

> I have lost my passion; why should I need to keep it
> Since what is kept must be adulterated?
> I have lost my sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch;
> How should I use them for your closer contact?

The conquering of the senses is the next familiar stage of the saint's development. In *The Waste Land* Mr. Eliot faced the problems which life in the modern world presents to the religiously-inclined and suggested a way towards salvation (the way of self-surrender, sympathy and self-control). Then in *Ash Wednesday* we see the poet pursuing his chosen path. He overcomes hope and despair, assumes control over his senses, and praying 'Lord I am not worthy, but speak the word only,' presses forward to become at one with God. In *Four Quartets* the whole drama is played out again, the problems more profoundly explored, the answers more passionately asserted. And at the end of that poem we feel that the poet has effected his personal salvation, that through humility and self-abnegation he has achieved that 'condition of complete simplicity (Costing not less than everything)'.

Mr. Eliot has written no poetry subsequent to *Four Quartets*. He was only a poet for as long as it suited his purpose to be one. His purpose was the fulfilment of his spiritual destiny, and having accomplished it there was little else to do than to devote what remained of life to the doctoring of an art which had fallen into a state of crucial sickness – the art of drama. And even here his attempts have been feeble and his innovations merely technical. But we could expect nothing more from a man in whom the intellectual and emotional tensions which are the raw materials of all great art have been resolved. *The Family Reunion* was the last of his plays in which the subject matter was significant, and it was published in 1939, the same year as the first part of *Four Quartets*.

But Mr. Eliot's dramatic works are not my present concern. I mention them only in support of my contention that he is not a poet but a saintly man. The story of his spiritual development as told in his poetry is in its broad outlines identical with that of many of the great religious men of history. For him poetry was a means to an end. For Rilke, as for the majority of major poets, it was an end in itself.

Neither of the poems we have considered is didactic, yet they contain implied 'messages' which, in conclusion, I propose to extract and place side by side. The way to Mr. Eliot's absolute is through humility, 'strength and submission'; he exhorts us to 'make perfect our will', to overcome desire and delight in things of the senses and seek redemption through the refining fire of the Holy Ghost. Rilke would have us free ourselves from such worldly preoccupations as

money and security in order to establish within ourselves an undivided consciousness such as the child, the animal, the hero, the craftsman and the unrequited lover in part exhibit. Not the suppression of the senses, but no less an act of will, the heightening of the intensity of our experience of the world and everything in it: this is the glorious purpose of life.

Apart from the emphasis on will these two doctrines appear to be almost contradictory. And yet each commends itself as truth. Prejudice will probably incline us to favour one more than the other, but if we attempt a detached judgement of the two poems according to literary or ethical standards we find there is little to choose between them. They are the products of two minds differently constituted. Reading them together obliges us to abandon any belief we may have in an absolute truth and to acknowledge that the understanding arrived at through any individual's experience of life and given artistic expression, deserves to be recognized as a truth as valid as any other. As individuals we may be able, like Mr. Eliot, to accept one of the great ready-made truths, or we may be compelled, like Rilke, to fabricate our own out of the raw materials offered by the earth's rich stores of philosophical and religious teaching.

THE ASPECT OF LOVE

STEPHANIE BOYD

On the south slopes of love let us lie down
mutely to thaw;
Nor try to speak, when all is unspeakable
in such an hour.

When the rich rivers of our secret selves
within us meet,
We are the landscape, owning, being owned,
one fond estate.

Trespassers from the past, no shadows dare
climb in our sky:
Private as dreams the place, and we land-locked
perpetually.

Only the sun espies and imitates
our world aslant,
And so beyond it shows another world
incontinent.

TWO POEMS

KENNEDY WILLIAMSON

DEUCE!

I sit and brood within the speeding train,
And through the night-backed mirror-window pane
I scrutinize my silent twin as he
Gazes as unrelentingly at me.

Between us just the wafer-width of glass,
No skill or craft has he or I to pass
And merge for secret parley to decide
Which of us is the Jekyll, which the Hyde.

THE DEAD AND THE DEAD

The mourner at the graveside turned at last
  And thought about the soulless, null routine
  Awaiting him in Cheapside, the machine
In whose necrosis all his days are passed.

His silk hat he rebalanced on his head.
  He drove his car back to his City tomb.
  He put his shroud on in the toilet-room,
And mourned his soul-free colleague who was dead.

SARDONIC MUSINGS ON EZRA POUND

PAUL SELVER

Yes, I knew Ezra well of old, before
The late G. Princip fired his gat. To him
(Ezra, I mean) came week by week, in his prim
Kensingtonian quarters, nearly a score

Of Les Jeunes, when night had fallen, raptly to squat
At the feet of the velvet-jacketed Maestro. Ah,
His harangues, besprinkled with splashes of heady blah,
His frenzies, some of them fine and others not.

Ezra's newfangled gospel duly turned
Les Jeunes into Les Imagistes, and fame
Was theirs eftsoons. Not mine, though, for I spurned
This curdled brew which met with such acclaim.
I mused. 'It's not a patch, or I'll be durned,
On the works of that arch-rhymester, Shelley by name.'

ORIGIN OF A SPECIES

KATHLEEN V. RICHARDSON

It's no use stating the obvious,
For the obvious isn't there
To the clever young gent with a cultural bent
And a heterodoxical flair.

It's futile to be definitive
Of facts that are known to all
And to claim a guffaw for a mother-in-law
Send clever young gents up the wall.

For Life isn't Sunday Papers,
Except the *Observer* of course,
Where, Thesaurus to hand, some Half-Blue may expand
On The Bat or The Boot or The Horse.

Comics are not very funny
And Heroes are not very brave,
And as for the Slap (and the Tickle mayhap) –
That's no way for a Brain to behave

For Love is no light-hearted matter
Of Boy-Girl, and endlessly -Brat
Though ever since Noah the spermatozoa
Have tried to reduce it to that.

Since Daddies are dreary old clichés
And Mommas would hardly be missed,
Some recondite spasm of protoplasm
Caused clever young gents to exist,

And it's very remarkable too that
With only this premise to go on,
Clever young gents beget clever young gents
And so on, and so on, and so on.

THE BIRTH OF GENIUS

STEPHEN GRAHAM

The Solitary Singer: A critical biography of Walt Whitman, by Gay Wilson Allen (The Macmillan Company, New York, $8)

Thomas Gray, by R. W. Ketton-Cremer (Cambridge Univ. Press, 25s.)

The biography of Whitman as a youth is almost revolting: he was a dandified and sententious little snob, loud and vulgar, conceited and quarrelsome, an insincere prude, writer of clap-trap and sloppy verse. Himself sipping gin cocktails, he wrote lurid novels in the temperance cause, with, as his biographer remarks, 'an interminable soap-opera plot'. Mentor to the naughty New Yorkers of his time he said unto them 'Swear not, drink not, rough and tumble not!' In a novel such a young man would come to no good and would be likely to develop into the villain of the piece. In life, however, the miraculous sometimes happens. It happens in religious experience, and it is probable that the early life of St. Paul would make nasty reading.

Walt Whitman's awakening seems to have taken place when he was twenty-nine or thirty years of age and had lost his employment as a regular journalist. Then he used to go down to the unfrequented shore of Coney Island where he would bathe naked or rush along the ribbed sand shouting remembered poetry to the four winds. He had a habit of tearing out pages of Shakespeare or Pope's Homer and other classics.

> These he would ponder while he listened half attentively to the sound of the sea. He had begun to experiment with a new poetic technique and always carried with him a notebook in which he jotted down subjects and ideas for poems, or even first drafts of verses he might be able to use. But the plan to fill a book with these revolutionary poems was still vague.

Up till then Walt Whitman had been writing the cheap moralizing which was in popular demand. When vice is rampant there is always a market for lurid and scathing condemnation of vice. He had joined in the petty political tub-thumping of the age. Even when he wrote of Liberty, 'let others despair of thee, but I will never despair of thee,' it was not because he believed in liberty, but because in 1848 it was in the air.

> God, 'twas delicious!
> That brief tight glorious grip
> Upon the throats of kings!

His struggle was to express not what was in the air but what was in himself and to answer the question: 'Who are you, Walt Whitman?' He never fully answered that question, but all that was lasting and beautiful in the poetry which he wrote later can be understood as part of the answer.

In 1855, when he was thirty-six years old, he had printed at his own expense a thousand copies of a slender volume of verse entitled *Leaves of Grass.* Probably about forty copies were sold and the rest were given away. The poet announced:

> I know that the spirit of God is the eldest brother
> of my own,
> And that all the men ever born are also my brothers,
> and the women my sisters and lovers –

but his fellow-Americans, even though as close akin, were not interested.

He had written and had printed such memorable lines as:

A child said, What is grass? fetching it to me with full hands;
How could I answer the child? I do not know what it is any more than he.

But it did not look like poetry to the man casually turning the pages of *Leaves of Grass* in a bookshop.

When sixty years later Carl Sandburg answered the child's question:

I am the grass; I cover all . . .
I am the grass
Let me work –

it was at once accepted as fine poetry. And Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* is a set book in schools.

The form, or rather formlessness, of the verse is no longer a novelty: it is accepted. In 1855 it was not exactly original. That style of writing belonged to journalism but not to literature. Many editorials were written in what can be called prose-poetry and sentimental farragoes partly rhythmical, sometimes alliterative, were printed in italics so as to impress the reader. When spaced out they might conceivably look like poetry. Walt Whitman was undisciplined; he could not be a literary craftsman. Free-flowing untrammelled expression was the easiest way to think aloud or talk to himself in print. What was in him to come out of him was the all-important element, and the force and music must depend on his passion, his intellectual suffering, his melancholy or his momentary ebullience.

To the end of his life Walt Whitman continued talking to himself with the English-speaking world listening in, and eventually said goodbye to himself:

Farewell dear mate, dear love!
I am going away I know not where,
Or to what fortune, or whether I may ever see you again.

Gay Wilson Allen tells the story with extraordinary fullness of detail, more satisfying to American than to British readers, but it is a good biography, the best existent and not likely to be soon excelled.

When we turn to a more conventional biography, that of Gray by Mr. Ketton-Cremer, our main interest is in how a leisured gentleman of the eighteenth century came to write what some would call the finest poem in the English language. There is no passionate, lurid, dramatic life-story in the background, no soul-searching. A gentle scholar, polished – yes, but almost a recluse – mused and was passive in Stoke Poges churchyard, and the soul of village England gave voice. Gray did not write much else of note, though the 'Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College' has some much-quoted verses. The *Elegy* is unique. Indeed, it almost seems to be an accident in Gray's life. He might not have gone to Stoke Poges and he might not have written the poem or anything comparable. One line of the *Elegy* might have been his own epitaph: 'Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest.'

He never was in any hurry to write the poem and have it printed. The first few stanzas were written in 1742, laid aside, then added to, polished, laid aside again, continued over a period of eight years, when they were enclosed in a letter sent to Horace Walpole. All this is highly interesting, and about it and much else you may read in Mr. Ketton-Cremer's valuable biography. Gray as a poetic genius was born in the *Elegy*. He lives in it and at last dies in it. It is his scroll.

EXOTIC AND HOMELY

F. PRATT GREEN

The Tree of Idleness, by Lawrence Durrell (Faber, 8s. 6d.)
Experiences and Places, by Clifford Dyment (Dent, 6s.)
A Shot in the Park, by William Plomer (Cape, 7s. 6d.)
The Complete Poems of Francis Ledwidge (Jenkins, 10s. 6d.)

I take few books with me on holiday, preferring to read, haltingly as a child, the book of Nature. This year, not knowing I should have to review it, I put into my rucksack Lawrence Durrell's new collection of poems, received through The Poetry Book Society, and read it on the cliffs of South Cornwall and Pembrokeshire. I admire Durrell's work above that of most contemporary poets. His fastidious, almost elegant, style suits his themes, particularly his rich, yet restrained, evocations of exotic places and an antique spirit, of that Eastern Mediterranean world of which he has written so well in prose. A self-critical, witty writer, at home on the tight-rope of words, he can be as objective, ironic, and romantic at the same time, as in 'Clouds of Glory', a poem on the dangerous theme of babyhood:

> He can outface
> a hundred generations with a yawn
> this Faustus of the pram,
> spreadeagled like a starfish . . .

One hopes that Lawrence Durrell is not destined to be chiefly the poet's poet of his generation, though his influence might do something to moderate the new fashion for the pretentiously clever; he deserves a much wider audience.

Clifford Dyment has been appreciated, and anthologized, for more than twenty years. His places are both exotic and homely, his experiences warm with compassion, whether he writes of the trial of an incorrigible rogue, or of a convivial journey to an Eisteddfod, or of childhood. His warmth and directness, his grace and precision, his artistic integrity, will surely earn for him a small niche in the surviving literature of our time. But the dream poem with which he ends his book is so startlingly beautiful, in a surrealistic way, that I wondered if he might not have exercised too rigid an intellectual control over the whisperings of his sub-conscious. This poem certainly adds interest to a book one is glad to recommend to every reader.

A Shot in the Park is vintage Plomer. One cannot help comparing his readable, wise-cracking, ironical, ballad-like verse with that of John Betjeman. Guess which of them wrote:

> In lofty light the towers dissolve
> Of yellow elms this tranquil day,
> Crumble in leisurely showers of gold
> All Turneresque in bright decay,

and

> Yellow November flowering ivy,
> Penned-up sheep and the stacked-up hay,
> Crested gold over purple scrubland
> Elm-trees rot in a still decay.

You will have guessed right, of course. Plomer usually eschews verbal and rhythmic magic, nostalgic sentiment, the consolations of religion. No strange light falls through his verse to illuminate mortality. The diverse, amusing characters of Plomer do not engage our sympathy, despite his publisher's assurance that his humour is more genial than it used to be. On the other hand, Betjeman could not have hit off Thomas Hardy so wickedly. So let's enjoy them both.

Francis Ledwidge was a victim of World War I. After the choice wine of Durrell, and the gin-and-something of Plomer, his *Collected Poems* are water from a natural spring, gone a little stale with keeping. This is homely poetry, where home is Ireland. The poem which Lord Dunsany, in one of his original introductions, picks for special commendation strikes me as prettily quaint, but perhaps you need to be Irish to be stirred by 'the shadow people'. Other poems touch deeper levels, as when in 'A Memory' Ledwidge ends unexpectedly:

> And yet the heart will dust it of its grime,
> And hover round it in a silver spell,
> Be lost in it and cry aloud in fear;
> *And like a lost soul in a pious ear,*
> *Hammer in mine a never easy bell.*

GLANCING COLOURS

KENNEDY WILLIAMSON

The Magic Stone, by Geoffrey Johnson (Robert Hale, 7s. 6d.)
Flaming Arras, by Alan Smithies (Fortune Press, 6s. 0d.)
Matthew Arnold, by J. D. Jump (Longmans, Green & Co., 10s. 6d.)

Tennyson likened poetry to shot silk, which may exhibit different colours to different people according to their angle of vision, and indeed different colours to one person at different times. To be like shot silk, however, poetry must have a richness in the fabric, and a workmanship in the weaving.

This image of shot silk applies perfectly to the poetry of Geoffrey Johnson, who has the true poet's approach to experience, and has no less a fastidious distaste for shoddiness. Against much in our crazy civilization and our inverted structure of society, he is a rebel, but he is no rebel against the best traditions of art. The plea that technique impairs a poet's freedom of utterance is made to seem rather silly by *The Magic Stone.* Here are poems to which one may return and find that a shift of mood or circumstance has caused the weave to glance with new colours and with unsuspected patterns of significance.

Despite vicissitudes and a spasmodic recognition, Alan Smithies has kept his poetic purpose steadfastly in view, and now one rejoices at the publication of *Flaming Arras* and at the reception accorded to it. A schoolmaster, like Geoffrey Johnson, he has never allowed the disenchantments of his exacting profession to repel the Muse. He has a sense for history and the romantic past, but he is also an interpreter of the present, and a seer looking into the future.

It is fitting that this review of two schoolmasters' poetry should deal also with a new biography of an Inspector of Schools. Son of the great Headmaster of

Rugby and uncle of Mrs. Humphry Ward, Matthew Arnold was a much more sprightly person than is generally believed. Think of the jealous anger of Mr. Gilbert Harding when he reads this letter sent to a close friend at Oxford:

> Dear Slade, You must breakfast here to-morrow, because John Blackett is coming, who wishes to meet you. Ridiculous as such a desire is, it is too unimportant for me to refuse to gratify it. Your faithful servant, M. Arnold.

Disdainful effrontery could not be more superb. As an Inspector, Arnold once had to visit the schools in Edmonton, and instead of staying there, spent each night in London, with a resultantly heavy claim for expenses. When he received an official note: 'Mr. M. Arnold, H.M.I., Why not stay at Edmonton?' he replied 'How can you expect me to do so, when John Gilpin couldn't?' His claim was allowed!

He was the first layman to hold the Chair of Poetry at Oxford, and the first Professor to speak from it in English and not Latin. He was the originator of the term 'Philistine', used with a more than ethnographical significance.

At sixty-five, he leapt lightheartedly over a fence while running for a tram, and fell dead. An acquaintance then made the famous remark 'Poor Arnold, he won't like God.' I think there is quite a likelihood that God liked him.

It was he who wrote 'More and more, mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us.' Mr. Jump's reassessment is readable without being lightweight; he has allowed his book to be enriched with research, never burdened by it.

TWO PLAYS

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

Upon This Rock, by James Kirkup (Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, 6s.)

The Death of Satan, by Ronald Duncan (Faber and Faber, 12s. 6d.)

These plays emphasize two distinct aspects of poetry in the theatre. The first, a dramatic chronicle of Peterborough Cathedral marking the thirteen-hundredth anniversary of its foundation, is episodic in design with the broad sweep of the story knit by the chronicler. The poetry is subordinated to the pageantry and the drama is drawn from the impact of great personalities upon the life and character of the cathedral, Wulfere, St. Chad and Hereward The Wake to Wolsey, Katherine of Aragon, Mary Queen of Scots and Cromwell: and from the dedication in service of masses of ordinary people through the centuries. James Kirkup has used the building as a vast stage on which he has marshalled his performers, both singly and by the hundred, for moments of crisis and climax. On the evening I attended the packed audience was held by pageantry and declamation so blended with their setting that the cathedral itself became the shining, central character. The emphasis was on simple narration and dialogue, but the poet awaits the opportunity when he may dwell at length on a single event.

In the second play, Ronald Duncan is concerned not with progress but with penance, not with objective review but with subjective inquisition. Poetry is used as a satiric arrow to pierce the heart of time. A witty colloquy in hell between Byron, Wilde, Shaw and Don Juan results in the latter

returning to earth only to discover that seduction no longer shocks even his re-incarnated Anna, sin has lost its significance, conscience has become a mere inhibition, and faith is in pawn to the psychiatrist. Satan is shocked to death by the news: thus Don Juan, his vocation gone, is left to find salvation through suffering. Byron, Wilde, and Shaw, however, still wallow in their own particular hells of eternal indifference.

This brittle play postulates a problem, and something like a cosmic waste-land is devastatingly dissected with mature perception and expert theatrical technique.

CREATORS AND COMMENTATORS

GEOFFREY JOHNSON

Inspiration and Poetry, by C. M. Bowra (Macmillan, 21s.)

Poetry and the Age, by Randall Jarrell (Faber, 18s.)

The Unmediated Vision, by Geoffrey H. Hartman (Cumberlege, 40s.)

A crazy feature of present-day letters is that for one edition of a living poet there are fifty publications on the theory of poetry – that is, far too many and far too expensive books written about books, explorations of the poetic process, of the poetic this and that, and almost always elaborately made by those with no personal knowledge of the creative experience. Usually, too, such authors carefully confine themselves to poets who are dead and are therefore quite safe subjects.

Within these reservations Mr. Bowra's is a well-languaged, catholic and most readable collection, skilfully bound together by the comprehensive title-essay. Inevitably, he finds little new to add to what many have already said about Horace, Dante, Milton, Pushkin and Lermontov, Hölderlin and Hardy, but he adds that little in a prose of exquisite grace and charm. His learning is vast, but his manner is easy, and his admiration of the classical in its purest sense should be a most salutary corrective to the anarchy bedevilling much modern verse.

Like the foregoing, Mr. Jarrell's book consists largely of reprints, but its general theme is far more venturous – an attempted evaluation of the living; he is also a practising poet and not just a critic. His book is less well produced for the price, less penetrating, less unified and much less ably written. Far too easily he accepts the Eliot-Auden-Moore set-up into which he has been born. He is at his best on Robert Frost, to whom he devotes two essays, and to whom, despite much that is heart-felt and finely said, he actually does some disservice by almost pure panegyric. He also devotes two essays, whereas two pages would be much more than enough, to the praise of the poetaster, Marianne Moore. Another arch-disintegrator of poetic sense and form whom he swallows wholesale is William Carlos Williams. This is surprising, for on the evidence alone of his very adroit question-begging in his defence of The Obscurity in Modern Poetry he seems to be much too intellectually agile to be the gudgeon he is here. And if Mr. Jarrell is the good

poet he is claimed to be, we must except him from the generalization that good poets write good prose, for it is often careless and involved in his case, and sometimes so cleverly pyrotechnic as to give the reader a headache.

The jargon title of the last of three books gives a fair warning of the Eng. Lit. Ph.D. thesis to follow, the academic exploration that is fairly common over here and ubiquitous in America. Here again we have a string of essays – on Wordsworth, Hopkins, Rilke and Valéry, well meant and lovingly done, with an attempted inquiry into the nature of modern poetry and the nature of all poetry. And of course we have here again Hopkin's Windhover – yes, yet again! – laboriously analysed syllable by precious syllable, just as if not merely a sonnet and that by no means faultless, but the Collected Works of William Shakespeare were under discussion:

> The poem's very continuity seems to derive from an on-the-wing multiplication of one word in the next, like a series of accelerating explosions: 'morning' to 'morning's' to 'minion'; 'king' takes the 'in', 'daylight' picks up the 'd' of '-dom' and 'dauphin' . . .

We have heard all this, Oh! so many times before. All uncritical eulogy, and not a breath of independent inquiry anywhere – whether, for example, the tortured alliteration is not sometimes as pathetic as Pistol's and Bully Bottom's. As with Hopkins, so with the other three poets he writes about: Mr. Hartman finds all their utterances marvellous.

AN INNOCENT ABROAD

KATHLEEN VALMAI RICHARDSON

Selected Fables of La Fontaine, translated by Marianne Moore (Faber, 10s. 6d.)
Tristan Corbiere: Selections from Les Amours Jaunes, translated by C. F. MacIntyre (University of California, 28s.)
Aristophanes' Lysistrata, translated by Dudley Fitts (Faber, 12s. 6d.)

Because my critical approach to translated work is largely unacademic, I ask first that it should be interesting in itself rather than an exercise in comparisons. In any case, both Aesop's *Fables* and La Fontaine's versions of them have now passed through so many hands and minds that a kind of free-for-all may be said to exist, and Marianne Moore has taken discreet advantage of this. Not for want of research however, for Miss Moore is a conscientious artist in all things: thirty persons are meticulously cited in the Foreword as having contributed to her task. Also, she has evidently borne in mind La Fontaine's own prefatory words . . . 'unless I could renovate them with touches which would enhance their flavour, I should be doing nothing at all. That is what is wanted nowadays, novelty and gaiety' . . . ('Nowadays' being the sunburst era of Louis XIV for whose heir The Fountain played).

Obviously, the more translated a work has been, the more difficult it is to repeat the trick neither too repetitiously nor too blatantly divergent from the original. And here we are dealing with the much-transcribed original of the original. To forge a contemporary metric consistent with La Fontaine's purposefully 'gay and novel' Gallic rhythms, yet suitable to a poet of Miss Moore's weight, cannot have been easy, and indeed, does not always come off in this selection. There is, at times, a curious feeling of doughiness about these *vols-au-vent* which perhaps we may blame on too many cooks. One

does not look for literal transcription of language so long as the story is preserved, which it is, and if these vocal animals seem to be Miss Moore's own, why not? She is rather good at animals, as we know; and who has not noticed that a French cat or dog, however unimpeachable its pedigree, somehow manages to look different from its brothers in other lands.

The basic resemblances are here, though, just as La Fontaine maintained them from Aesop the Phrygian. A poet of character should leave his mark on whatever he undertakes even if the sniffling fox 'whose pose suggested fragrances' should have been so contorted. We live in an age where, in order to avoid the deadly gloss of streamlining, contortion sometimes becomes necessary. If some of these new versions suffer from too much refurbishing, some are authentic poems in their own right.

No doubt it is entirely ethical to print the original alongside the translation, and in the selections from *Les Amours Jaunes,* the reader with but little French may, by this means, get more easily inside the original. C. F. MacIntyre mostly serves Le Corbiere faithfully, though I do not believe the pose of that rugged character 'suggested fragrances'; I believe that by *bonne odeur de saintété* he meant 'good smell of saintliness', because for one thing he was a Breton and for another, his sardonic muse was born of painfully literal pain. Tristan Corbiere, born in 1845, is a poet for moderns. A Contumacious Poet, who pecks at his own feathers and draws blood. *C'est plutot un Anglais . . . un Etre*? A wild bird with shot in his wing who fell among ancient owls and was said to live in concubinage with the Muses, 'not knowing how to live, he kept on living, and not knowing how to die, he went on writing'. This tremendous, acid, desperate poem is too long to quote in full or to allow us to compare here its *staccato strepitoso* with Browning, who beside this black fury seems but a stammering adolescent.

And what is a modest Innocent to say of the *Lysistrata* of Aristophanes, brilliantly done into American by Dudley Fitts, chorus of sen'emen'al gen'elmen from Spahta and all? One must forget the barefoot whimsies of our own outdoor amateur theatricals and adopt a rough peasant humour, as the cunning and sophisticated Greek did, basing his farce on a simple physical indecency in order to drive home the hard argument behind it – the greater folly and indecency of protracted war.

Ribald and bawdy, nevertheless, the *Lysistrata* is a social document and it may not be too much to hope that its publication in this easy and colloquial form might induce the Great Matriarchy to adopt Lysistrata's strategem to rid the world of warriors. But since the population of the United States alone must be many times that of ancient Greece, one has visions of administrative difficulties; of hordes of harassed M.R.O.s (Marital Relations Officers) trying to cope with the renegades – on Mothers' Day?

THE ALBERT RALPH KORN ESSAY £20 PRIZE AWARD

The announcement of the Winning Entry in this Competition for the best short essay on 'Clarity versus Obscurity in Poetry' will be made in the next number of *The Poetry Review.* The prize of £20 has been offered by Mr. Albert Ralph Korn, of New York, a deep lover of poetry and a distinguished American. The entries have been received from Members all over the world.

NEW PRINTS AND REPRINTS

NOTES BY THE EDITORIAL STAFF

(The inclusion of a new work in these notes does not preclude a subsequent review.)

How poets make their poems is an attractive subject for an essay or a book: and by coincidence two new publications to be reviewed in our next issue include chapters devoted to it. They are: *The Fire and the Fountain,* by John Press (Oxford University Press, 25s.), and *The Making of a Poem,* by Stephen Spender (Hamish Hamilton, 15s.). From one of the publishers we learn that 'the difficulties and emotions of composition' are described, and from the other that 'the way in which a poem germinates and grows in a poet's mind' is shown. These books follow two of the kind which are reviewed by Geoffrey Johnson in the foregoing pages.

'Not long ago,' writes Professor C. Day Lewis, 'Mr. Robert Graves declared that, of twentieth-century poets, the best influences for younger writers were Thomas Hardy and Robert Frost.' It is in a preface to the Penguin edition of Frost's *Selected Poems* (Penguin Poets, 3s. 6d.) that Professor Day Lewis recalls this, and he is much in sympathy with it. 'Whether time will show that Frost is a major poet, I cannot tell: but, of all living poets writing in English, he gives me the most satisfaction, the strongest sense of a man committed absolutely to his vocation, at home in his medium, and saying things well which we are the better for hearing.' The selection from Robert Frost's poetry – by himself – is as admirable as those introductory words.

Another volume in the Penguin Poets series is *Poems and Prose of John Dryden,* a selection by Douglas Grant (3s. 6d.). How neatly, in their stiff covers, these 'Penguins' are presented! We pay tribute also to the latest volumes in the Everyman's Library – three, a comprehensive edition of *Wordsworth's Poems,* newly edited and introduced by Philip Wayne (Dent, 7s. each). A second volume completing the edition of *The Poetical Works of John Milton,* under Miss Helen Darbishire's supervision, has come from the Oxford University Press (35s.). Miss Darbishire has long been recognized as an authority on Milton: indeed, she has studied the text of his poem for thirty years, and her two volumes are an example of perfect scholarship – and, for the reader, a rich delight.

*

From new editions to new, first-time issues is a wide step this quarter. Professor C. S. Lewis delivered a lecture in Cambridge last year which has been printed with the title *De Descriptione Temporum* (Cambridge University Press, 2s. 6d.), but it must not discourage a serious audience, because their anticipation is amply realized after hearing the lecturer say, early on, that he has modified his transition from 'the Antique' to 'the Dark' in the history of letters 'because I believe we have since witnessed a change even more profound.'

And here let us offer praise to publishers who treat their poets well, including the Mitre Press, for their production of *Poems,* by Ailsa Cambridge (2s.). All too seldom are the booklets by new young verse-writers arranged with dignity, good print and lay-out in accordance with tradition: some are even

published without a title-page! Neither the publishers (Carillon Poetry Chapbooks) of *Manitoba Landscape*, nor the author, Lorene Frances Milliken, would, we think, wish us to apply the usual tests either to production or composition. W. Price Turner, with *First Offence* (Zebra Poets, 1s.), is another writer who is handicapped by a surfeit of ideas. 'Sleep is a black snow bottled in the brain.' So says Mr. Turner. Nevertheless, we forget whatever disappointment we may have felt during this survey as we reflect that the world's discords and dark deeds have not discouraged the writing of bright and not so bright verse. And, in conclusion, we turn to greatness – and a prose-work about it: an essay by John Arthos (University of Michigan Press, Geoffrey Cumberlege, 16s.), *On A Mask presented at Ludlow Castle,* Milton's famous work, 'already generally known (rather misleadingly), as *Comus*'.

The Rhythmic Year, by Gwladys M. Hawksley (Fortune Press, 7s. 6d.), is a little volume of unpretentious verses about outdoor joys in their due season and should please anyone who, like the author, has a keen eye for birds and beasts and flowers. One of the pleasures of a garden is to welcome the old familiar hardy perennials that grow and blow and the birds that sing in spring; exotics can prove far more disappointing.

*

Mermaids and matadors make a queer mixture. But Douglas Shepherd in a collection of verse whose title refers to one of each of them – *The Mermaid and the Matador* (Fortune Press, 6s.) – proves that they need not detract the reader from enjoyment of his skill. It is skilfulness rather than emotion that gives interest to Mr. Shepherd's writings. 'My quest was quietude,' he announces, seeking 'in tranquility a speaking end.' And his quest is successful. *Child with a Cockatoo* is another queerly-titled volume. It comes from Australia (Angus and Robertson, 15s.), and the author, Rosemary Dobson, whose principal subject is art and the artist, will not find herself short of a welcome from this journal, where some of her work has been printed. Simplicity is the dominant note, and so it is in Willoughby Weaving's *Sonnets and a few Lyrics* (Abbey Press, Abingdon, 5s.). The sonnets are well and sincerely written, but it is a very short lyric that stays longest in the reviewer's memory – 'Hips,' with its wise conclusion: 'Dead roses wait for beauty's sure return.'

A tale of Duck Island in verse – such is the explanatory sub-title of Stellanova Osborn's latest work, *Polly Cadotte* (Exposition Press, New York, 2.50 dollars). The verse is cleverly written in accordance with the method of Robert Frost and others:

> John Andrews, when he heard it, stopped a moment
> From the small carpentry he was intent on.
> He let the ring of his hammer die with its echo
> To ponder an old etching in his mind.

Rather a charming story, enriched by Indian-American folk-lore in the Great Lakes region, Michigan.

Also from across the Atlantic comes *Between Wars,* by Amory Hare (Wings Press, 3 dollars), a harvest of sonnets and road-songs. Amory Hare is an experienced craftsman, adept of the quick phrase – 'The sea's long sorrow' – which illumines many of these rhymes of struggle and severity. Another of the Wings Press books is *A Slant of Years,* by Anna Holm Pogue (2 dollars),

much of it devoted to the 'vivid life' still being lived yet 'behind the curtain of remembered years'.

Songs in the Afternoon, by A. Percival Needler (Brown & Sons, 3s.) contains much forthright and genuine poetry – a Hull member's work. His deep religious sense and sound craftsmanship are most evident in the lyric 'Good Friday' and in the sustained dramatic monologue, 'Paul in Rome'. Six translations of sonnets by Heredia and Arvers are also finely wrought.

Very wisely the English publishers of small volumes of verse are not unanimous about when a publication should appear or be withheld until a more appealing time for those who wish to read it. Only a handful of such books have come to hand during the summer, and Arthur Stockwell has sent four of them: *The Seeds of Youth,* by Malcolm Aidan Payne (2s. 6d.), *Kaleidoscope,* by Julius Willenz (2s.), *Primitive Response and other poems,* by R. C. Henderson, and *In the Dim Vial,* by 'Perseus' (7s. 6d.). There are also three pamphlets from overseas. One is by Sukanta Bhattacharya, a young poet of India, who, before he died at twenty-one, won fame with his revolutionary poetry, of which *Twenty-one Poems,* rendered into English by Sisir Chattopadhyaya, is published for private circulation only. Then, from Mexico, comes a poetical essay, *Inward Solitude,* by Waldo Ross (Orion, Mexico); and a South American poet sends from Buenos Aires an autographed copy of his *Salud o nada* – not in English, unfortunately: 'para The Poetry Review, homenaje de Rodolfo Alonso.' A gesture which we appreciate.

'DEAR EDITORS–'

(The opinions expressed in the following Letters from Readers are not necessarily those of *The Poetry Review.*)

TRIBUTE

. . . I am learning a lot more about modern poetry since I became a member of The Poetry Society, but I don't think the modern trend has as much faith, hope, and charity as the old! EDITH M. (LADY) WALKER

LETTER FROM A YOUNG MAN

(Written to the Editorial Board in reply to critical advice on his submitted verses)

I feel very humbly like a schoolboy with the right spirit and the wrong patience – using new tools with over-enthusiastic clumsiness. The word you complain is used twice, worried me a little, so I've substituted another in the first verse instead – but do revert to your suggestion if you prefer it. I'll leave you with authority to bed it down as you think fit – and thank you again for your patience.

Bye the bye – I'm doing some overtime next week and hope to forward to the Society's headquarters my belated subscription! Working on telephones is fine for material. You hear such classics as 'how's you head?' – 'Oh, it's gone!' and you use the most potent phrase of all: 'I'm sorry – your time is up!!' Then with a mixture of human concern and official indifference, you jerk two wires and two people apart. Good-bye and thank you –

WOULD-BE POET

RILKE'S 'EXPERIENCE' AT CASTLE DUINO

In the July-September number of *The Poetry Review* Stuart Holroyd speaks of 'the strange sensation of faint vibrations passing into him from the tree's interior'. This is now becoming a commonplace of radionic discovery. To quote Mrs. Eyre-Smith (*The Ark*, No. 55, August, 1955): 'This awareness (by animals of the thoughts in the minds of humans) extends even to a relationship with plant life . . . A leaf taken from its stem responds and emits radiations when a human being is near, and the radiations cease when the human presence is withdrawn . . .' At the Delawarr Laboratories at Oxford 'delicate radionic instruments were devised' for the perception and measuring of these operations.

REV. AMBROSE AGIUS, M.A., O.S.B.

THE WORD ASSONANCE

Referring to the correspondence between me and Geoffrey Johnson, a friend of mine who edits a poetry quarterly, is perturbed by the use of the word 'assonance'. He thinks 'assonance' should refer only to vowel-rhyme, as in morn-storm, deep-feet ('Ballad of Sir Patrick Spens'), and as defined in books of prosody. The rhymes I quoted from W. B. Yeats he says, should be called end-rhymes (cut-spot, etc.), and the rhymes used by Wilfred Owen such as braiding-brooding, stirs-stars, should be called half-rhymes. He fears a loose reference to assonance as a substitute for rhyme will be confusing to young poets.

Now I was using 'assonance' in its broad and primary sense of 'resemblance or correspondence of sound between two words or syllables', and I jumped to the conclusion that Mr. Johnson was using it in this sense too. If it is not too late, perhaps you would be kind enough to insert these few words in your 'Dear Editors – ' page, which might help to clarify this rather muddling situation.

P. E. DUNN

ASSONANCE RHYME

Geoffrey Johnson has been challenged for his remarks on assonance rhyming. I would support him in so far as he means that assonance should not take the place of full rhyme where full rhyme comes easily and in no way obscures the thought. Yeats's *Under Ben Bulben*, which has been quoted by P. E. Dunn, is largely written in full rhyme, the so-called assonance rhyme allowed only so that the natural spontaneity of the poem may not be disturbed. But, of course, all rhyming is assonantal, only what is specially called 'assonance rhyme' does not contain the same end-consonants. For instance: *meal-heel* is full rhyme, but *heel-deed* is assonance rhyme.

As regards the stanza quoted from *Under Ben Bulben*, is it not blank? To me *head-laid, there-near, cross-phrase, spot-cut* are not assonance rhymes, they are too far away in sound. Taking the first and last of them the assonance rhymes would have to be *head-bless, spot-shone,* or something like them. But the initial stanza contains a true assonance rhyme: *spoke-crow.*

I think it is better to get rid of the term 'rhyme' and simply say 'assonance'

where the rhyme is not full. Assonance has always been a conscious or unconscious device in the *internal structure* of English Poetry, particularly obvious as the years advanced; it was much employed by Tennyson and the poets who directly came after his period – Wilde, Dowson, Lionel Johnson and others. Then there was Swinburne, who gets his peculiar effects of melodious resonance nearly as much by assonance as by alliteration:

> From afar to the star that recedes, from anear to the wastes of the wild wide shore.

I do not think that the so-called 'Georgians' (with the exception of Elroy Flecker) used internal assonance with quite so much assurance and plangency as did the Victorians and Edwardians, but it occurs frequently, nevertheless. For instance, take these opening lines from a poem by Thomas Moult in Sir Edward Marsh's fourth 'Georgian' anthology:

> To the heart, to the heart the white petals
> Quietly fall.
> Memory is a little wind, and magical
> The dreaming hours.

Here 'white' in association with the first syllable of the three syllabled 'quietly' makes assonance, and the same in regard to the proximity of 'little' and 'wind'.

A common end-line device of my own (when it comes naturally) is to follow exact rhyme by assonance rhyme, which in its turn develops with a new exact rhyme. For instance – *sky-reply, side-ride.* HERBERT PALMER

HON.-CAPTAIN C. B. FRY

Readers who attended the Annual Luncheon of The Poetry Society in May and were enthralled by the presence and oratory of 'Admirable Crichton' C. B. Fry, may like to have an example of his own poetry, writes a 'Hero-Worshipper'. It appeared in *The Times* in 1945:

AGINCOURT TO ALAMEIN

> The West Wind fills the royal heraldic sail
> Out towards France and the pale sunrise.
> On bulwarks the gay shields gleam . . .
> The ironclad under steam,
> Pushing the salt surge from her eyes,
> Forges gigantic gray into the gale.
> Work of men's hand
> Sheer beautiful,
> Service of men's hearts
> Sheer dutiful –
> The King's Ships . . . The King's Ships . . .

'A LIGHT IN A DARKENING WORLD'

It has so often been in my mind to write to you about *The Poetry Review*. Now I must take the opportunity to do so. I consider The Poetry Society one of the most valuable of institutions; it is, to me, as a light in a rapidly darkening world, and with each new issue the flame grows a little brighter and stronger. I hope you will always be able to keep it alight, though I'm afraid you must have many difficulties to face in doing so. DR. E. G.

TOWARDS PARNASSUS

THE GREENWOOD PRIZE AWARD 1954

KENNEDY WILLIAMSON

There were ninety-five entries for this Competition, many of them running near to the length-limit of 250 lines. Although it was difficult to decide among the last seven, the poems were, in the mass, on a moderate standard of craftsmanship, and this supports the belief, held by many people, that a long poem is a contradiction in terms. Some competitors seemed to hope that lack of quality could be condoned by quantity; that readers' judgement might be bulldozed by sheer bulk; that crudities of language and snatches of doggerel might be hidden, simply by piling mounds of lines on top of them. There seemed to be a tacit assumption that, as no poet can maintain exquisite utterance for very long, there should be a critical compassion towards weaknesses – a genial disposition to 'make allowances'.

All these are dangerous and even pernicious fallacies. No one asks us to write long poems, and if we do, there is no warrant for expecting that readers, on the mere plea of length, will mercifully bate their stringency of demand. Far too much mediocre and slovenly stuff is being turned out by writers who hope to take a short cut to poetic fame; and, of course, the present vogue for formlessness has opened the sluicegates to hundreds of people to whom the idea would never have occurred, in an earlier age, that they might be poets.

It will be to the advantage of the whole realm of poetry, if all of us will be more fastidious, more self-critical, less ready to be facile. It is a paradox of experience that when the poet wears fetters on his ankles, he can dance the most nimbly. The act of coping with technical difficulties induces an inward exhilaration, a white heat that is akin to Inspiration and may beget poetry. It is not the fettered, but the foot-loose, who are clumsy. The true freedom lies not in lawlessness but in effective obedience to law. Only someone who has adjudicated such a contest as this (I reckon I have read 18,000 lines in the process) can know how urgent is the need for a new decorum towards artistic standards, and how disastrous is the widely prevailing watchword, 'Any old thing'll do'.

Of the poems submitted, nineteen were set aside for further scrutiny. The authors were: A. V. Stuart (Edinburgh); G. J. Blundell (East Malling); Eva Nendick (Ewell); Carla Lanyon Lanyon (Salisbury); John Thompson (Sydney); Katherine O'Brien (S.E. 12); Celia Randall (Holywood); Mrs. Fox-Hutchinson (Beal); William Hayward (Oxford); G. W. Hargreaves (Stockport); Roberta Shuttleworth (Guildford); Mrs. M. E. Hughes (Tunbridge Wells); Mabel Parker (Winsford); John Sibly (Cradley); J. Michael Hatwell (W. 9); The Rev. W. G. Davies (Oxford); A. Turner (Canterbury); Charles Hammond Gibson (Boston, U.S.A.); Alan Smithies (Exeter). The prize of £20 is awarded to Eva Nendick for 'The Oak Tree'. This poem has emotion, a philosophy which never becomes abstract and esoteric but is close to the familiar humanities, and a sensitive adherence to form without verbal inversions or toe-fingered phrasing. It is printed on page 196.

PREMIUM COMPETITION REPORT 24

GEOFFREY JOHNSON

The general standard of entries in this Competition was good, and there was a rich variety of unhackneyed themes; tame, derivative and poorly wrought poems were almost wholly absent. The following are commended: G. J. Blundell, Margaret Turner, Marguerite Munson, Dorothy Spring Howard, Helen Punch, W. R. Latham, Malcolm H. Tattersall, and Eveline Alty. Closer on the heels of the winner were Ruth Duffin, Winifred Kingdon-Ward, Odette Tchernine, A. E. Dodd, Pamela Cleaver, Juanita Peirse and Bertha L. Duncan.

The closest of all was Winifred Kingdon-Ward, who on a theme less diffuse than 'Light', might have won the prize. The winning poem is 'Lament and Reply' by Elizabeth Cluer of Tunbridge Wells. She almost lost it to the runner-up through the imperfection of the third strophe, but her first fourteen lines and most of the last so finely suggest what is almost unsayable – the elusive going and coming of imaginative vision – that there was finally no doubt at all of its being the best poem sent in. Its sparse punctuation is perhaps deliberate, but in the judge's opinion a few more commas would do no harm to a communication which by its very nature is already difficult enough.

Miss Cluer's poem is printed on page 204.

THE PREMIUM COMPETITION

The above competition continues as before with the total entrance fees as prize money which may be won outright by a single competitor or may be divided at the discretion of the Premium Adjudicator. An entrance fee of 2s. 6d. will be charged, and a stamped addressed envelope should be enclosed if a receipt is desired. Competitors must observe the following rules:

1. One poem only may be entered by each competitor.
2. The poem must be typed and no stamped addressed envelope will be required unless a receipt is desired. (See Rule 3).
3. Competitors must retain copies of their poems, as none can be returned.
4. Entries must be addressed 'Premium Competition', *The Poetry Review*, 33 Portman Square, W.1.
5. Each poem must bear the author's name and address.
6. Entrants must be members of the Poetry Society or regular subscribers to *The Poetry Review*.
7. The winner of a full Premium or one who has shared the prize money will not be eligible for re-entry for twelve months.
8. No previously published poem may be entered.

The closing date for the next Premium Competition will be 1st December, 1955.

THE GREENWOOD COMPETITION FOR 1955–56

The Poetry Society is empowered by the executors of the late Mrs. Julia Wickham Greenwood to offer the sum of Twenty Pounds as the Shirley Carter Greenwood Prize for the best single poem in open competition.

Entries should be addressed 'The Greenwood Prize', 33 Portman Square, London, W.1. Only one poem may be submitted by any one competitor, the length not to exceed 250 lines; no previously published poem may be entered. The full name and address of the author must be given and a stamped addressed envelope enclosed if return of the poem is desired. If a nom-de-plume is adopted, name and address of sender must be given in a closed envelope bearing the pseudonym. The winning poem will be printed in *The Poetry Review* and may be reprinted at the discretion of the Editorial Board, who may also reserve near winners for publication in *The Poetry Review*. Closing date is 31st August, 1956.

THE HOWARD PARSONS SONNET COMPETITION FOR 1955–56

The Poetry Society has the pleasure of announcing a new Competition for a Shakespearian sonnet.

The prize of Eight Guineas' which is generously offered by Mr. Howard Parsons, may be divided at the discretion of the adjudicator. The winning poem or poems will be published with the awards in *The Poetry Review*. Competitors must retain copies of their poems as these cannot be returned. The sonnets should bear a definite title and not merely be marked 'Sonnet'. Not more than two sonnets may be submitted by each competitor by 30th June, 1956. Address 'Sonnet Competition', The Poetry Society, 33 Portman Square, London, W.1. Entries should bear names and addresses of competitors. No previously published poem may be entered.

Result of Howard Parsons' Competition for 1954–5 will be announced in next issue.

AUTUMN EVENINGS AT PORTMAN SQUARE

'*The Battle for Beauty is Never Finally Won.*'

Here is a list of Programmes for Friday evenings, 6.30 to 7.30, at 33 Portman Square. Members 1s., Non-Members 2s. (Members, bring a Non-Member!)

Sept.	16	'I Knew W. H. Davies', by the President, Thomas Moult. Chairman: John Graddon. Reader: Pamela Corsie.
	23	Audience Night. Members are again invited to read their own or favourite Poem (limit three minutes). Chairman: Kennedy Williamson, M.A.
	30	'A young Philosopher looks at Modern Poetry'. Stuart Holroyd with Readers.
Oct.	7	More Verses Grave and Gay – with Esmé and Vera Beringer.
	14	'Poems from our School Days'. A programme arranged by Charles Alexander.
	21	'Trafalgar Day' – Poems of the Sea. Kelty Macleod and Wilton Cole.
	28	'W. B. Yeats – The Man and His Poetry'. An illustrated Talk by Robert Armstrong.
Nov.	4	Sir Alfred Munnings, K.C.V.O., P.P.R.A., reading his own Ballads. Chairman: John Strevens.
	11	'Freshness Deep Down Things' – An illustrated Talk on Gerard Manley Hopkins by J. M. Purser, M.A. Reader: Ann Greenland.
	18	'From Bad to Verse'. A Comic Programme with Mary Giles and Michael Howley, arranged by Charles Doran.
	25	'The Sound must seem an Echo to the Sense'. Stephen Graham.
Dec.	2	Our Own Poets – Alun Llewellyn, Rita Spurr, Geraldine Kalka-Cash. Arranged by Odette Tchernine.
	9	A Poet in Person – J. Redwood-Anderson – assisted by Natalie Moya and Gerek Schelderup.
	16	Gold Medallists of The Poetry Society in a Seasonal Programme: Elizabeth Dickie, Romayne Forsyth, Wendy Jubb, Victoria Watts, Vivian Burbury.

The next Gold Medal Examination will be held at 33 Portman Square, on Tuesday, 29th November.

CAN WE HELP YOU?

The answer is Yes to any Member who is anxious for the best advice about his or her work. The Poetry Society established a CRITICAL SERVICE some years ago, under the supervision of Miss E. D. BANGAY, and writers are invited to make use of it.

Two poems may be submitted for criticism and help, for a minimum fee of 5s. The Charge for the criticism of each additional poem (under 100 lines) is 2s. It is particularly requested that all poems submitted should be typed and that a stamped addressed envelope be enclosed.

PORTMAN SQUARE – RETROSPECT

Nineteen fifty-five's notably generous summer has faded now, but not forgotten are the varied and distinctive Talks it brought us. Professor Sadler on Asiatic poetry (his readers: Joyce Sagan, Pamela Humphries) conducted a rapt audience through the fascinating intricacies of Eastern thought; the resultant compressed statements arousing envy in contemporary poets present. Not the least intriguing part of his discourse was the pictorial illustration of symbols for which we poor Europeans must strive to find mere words. Your commentator, and even more so, your lay-out man, would welcome a brief block of brush-characters which might polish off these notes within an inch or so!

In July, F. Pratt Green talked about Poetic Pitfalls with his usual clarity, and a few weeks beforehand, a 'Panel' of mid-century poets, among them Danny Abse and Jon Larkin, stood fire in 'Any Questions' (Chair: Robert Armstrong) which might have been re-titled '*Many* Questions' since it became almost impossible to get a word in edgewise! Good talk and some glittering aphorisms fired questioners to equal loquacity. 'Why no poetry in politics?' warmed up the Panel. Needless to say, our old friend Obscurity once more tottered to his feet, but the marriage of May and December appears to be settling down; a happy marriage having no history, Obscurity must be getting the upper hand! The simile of the image as iceberg, two-thirds submerged – and a very striking comparison too – was, fortunately, not pushed to its logical conclusion, which would leave us with two-thirds hidden menace.

J. M. Purser, M.A., and his Senior boys, from St. Clement Danes (and what literary echoes that name awakes) came and gave a programme on W. H. Auden, 'The Vertical Man'. Mr. Purser's own contribution was full of interest, inspired by personal enthusiasm and guided by authentic knowledge. The boys read objectively, apt as choirboys in Bach and one felt that Auden would have liked his words so set before us without the 'interpretation' almost unavoidable in adult voices.

For Readings, we had Shakespeare-Shaw and Walt Whitman. In the former (Chelsea Poetry Circle) an enterprising experiment laid The Sonnets beside The Dark Lady thereof and Shaw emerged as a wit less pontifical than customary. Walt Whitman, The Great Gray I, was well served by Alan Phillips, Dorothy Easton, June Franklin and Michael Howley. Finally, Audience Night, when your commentator deputized for Mrs. Adamson: almost entirely 'Own Poetry' was heard, an interesting exception being our latest Gold Medallist, Romayne Forsythe, who gave a short extract from Romeo and Juliet. Looking forward, we await among other delectables, 'Our Own Poets'; John Redwood Anderson in a selection from his Lyrical Works; the heavenly Beringers; Sir Alfred Munnings (in dialect); the President; and a Grand Opening to unveil our new murals, the gift and creation of John Strevens, poet in paint.

K.V.R.

POETS' PROGRESS

THE ANNUAL MEETING

Following is the Report of The Poetry Society's Forty-sixth Annual General Business Meeting, held at 33 Portman Square on 25th May, 1955.

The President opened the proceedings with a welcome to the Members, and conveyed apologies for absence from Miss Margaret Rawlings, Mrs. Van den Bergh, and Stephen Graham.

The Honorary Treasurer submitted the Balance Sheet, the Appropriation of the Income and Expenditure Accounts for 1954, together with the report of the General Council, stating that, after making all the necessary provisions, there was a net surplus for the year ended 31st December, 1954, which amounted to £263 13s. 4d. The balance of the Accumulated Fund at the 31st December now stood at £2,857 19s. 9d.

Examining and explaining the Accounts in detail and formally recommending their adoption, he said: 'All in all, 1954 was a year of varied fortune. The expansion of Auditions was a notable feature: membership remained the greatest challenge, and the utmost vigilance in expenditure in all directions is still required.' He paid tribute to the work of the Staff and particularly commended to the Society the Auditors, Messrs. Godwin & Taylor, who were re-appointed, the motion being seconded by Mr. William Kean Seymour and carried unanimously.

Mr. Robert Armstrong moved the acceptance of the Report and Balance Sheet, which was seconded by Mr. Charles Doran and carried unanimously with applause.

The Honorary Treasurer then formally moved that Messrs. Barclays Bank Limited be appointed Bankers for 1955 – this was in terms which he read to the Meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Charles Doran and carried unanimously.

The President began his address by congratulating the Hon. Treasurer, Mr. John Graddon, on presenting the meeting with ample cause 'for lighter hearts and indeed for more and more of the eagerness of spirit that showed itself a year ago in the knowledge that *the tide had turned*.' His promise made then that the Society's headquarters would be improved had been partly fulfilled, and he referred to the re-decoration of the entrance-hall and various rooms. 'But they would be an empty shell without the happy service given by our new General Secretary and Registrar (Mrs. Helen Graddon) and the staff – Miss Pamela Corsie, Miss Fiona Weir, Mrs. Wycherley and Mrs. Price.'

Among the tasks awaiting us, he said, is that of solving the great problem of the Centres. He looked forward to the engagement of a liaison official when possible – 'Call him a propaganda secretary if you prefer to.' Our need of propaganda makes essential not only *The Poetry Review* but also *The Voice of Youth*. 'Without the young people our Cause will fail and fade out.'

The President paid tribute to Mr. John Graddon as editor of *The Voice of Youth* as well as honorary treasurer, and to the Editorial Board. The members of the General and Executive Councils were given thanks, and so were Mr. Charles Doran, Miss Margaret Rawlings, and Mrs. Kathleen

Richardson for special work on behalf of the Friday Readings and the Auditions. Among the many names read out during the address were those of contributors to the Friday evenings, including young poets and Silver Medalists: and the Examiners (now named on the inside cover of this *Review*). 'They are professional, but their services are as devoted and as thoroughgoing as any that are given for love.' The name-giving ended on a note of sorrow for the loss through death during the year of two of our Councillors, Mrs. Fanny Moore and Mr. Guy Pertwee.

Mr. John Graddon followed the President's address by speaking of the leadership which had inspired the Society, the Committees and the Members during the past year, and concluded by thanking Mr. Moult for his considerable services to the Society – a motion enthusiastically supported.

The President asked the members to approve of Mrs. Kathleen Sheppard being made an honorary member in recognition of her services to the Society. This was carried with acclamation. A notice of motion referring to Centres, and relating only to a newspaper report of poetry activities in the Walton and Weybridge area, was proposed, discussed and withdrawn. Finally the ballot for the General Council was taken, and on the scrutiny of the Auditors it was decided that the members whose names are included on the inside cover of this number of *The Poetry Review* were elected for the ensuing year.

The meeting closed with the President's thanks to those Members who had been present.

MISS CRACROFT – MRS. SHEPPARD

When the toast 'Our Guests' was given – in rhyme – by Kennedy Williamson at the annual Luncheon of The Poetry Society in May (see pp. 184–186) he included the following lines of tribute to Miss Kathleen Cracroft, who resigned from the office as General Secretary and Registrar on the occasion of her marriage last autumn:

> . . . There's warrant for believing that the leopard
> Is loth to change his spots, and MRS. SHEPPARD
> I hope and hazard will make no demur,
> She having love for us, as we for her,
> If I still use a genial soubriquet,
> And speak of her as our devoted '*Cra*'
> Still having kindly thoughts of Thirty-three
> And all the monstrous, crazy jamboree,
> The warfare and the frenzy and the rage
> In which the breed of poets must engage,
> The selfsame *genus irritabile*
> On which old Horace made some *jeux-d'esprit.*
> Horace to-day would certainly remark
> How close is Portman Square to Regent's Park,
> And how incredible that hitherto
> It's not been part and parcel of the Zoo.
> Well, *Cra* has now emerged from the abyss,
> Long to enjoy, we hope, connubial bliss.

ROBERT CONQUEST

Poems

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POET'S PLEASURE:
NEWS FROM THE CENTRES

BY THE EDITORIAL STAFF

Recognition of The Poetry Society as a vital influence in contemporary literature was given when the Suffolk Centre, with headquarters at Ipswich, was entrusted with the organization of a world-wide Poetry Prize Competition to commemorate the bicentenary of George Crabbe, who was born on Christmas Eve, 1755, at Aldeburgh on the Suffolk seaboard.

This recognition was twofold, for our President, Mr. Thomas Moult, was appointed to act as one of three judges, his colleagues being Sir Francis Meynell and Mr. R. N. Currey, both of whom are poets residing in East Anglia. And the invitation to Suffolk-born people was circulated by Miss K. M. Turner, honorary secretary of the Suffolk group, whose work for poetry is well known and appreciated by our readers.

Latest news about the competition is that it has proved a great success. There were nearly a hundred entries, and the result of the adjudication is that Mr. F. A. Tomlinson, of Lowestoft, has gained the award with 'Suffolk Sky'. At least one of the judges was happily surprised by the high quality of the poetry submitted.

NATAL AND DURBAN (S.A.)

Away in South Africa this enthusiastic Centre has held a poetry competition of a rather different kind. Mr. Thomas H. Lawrence, whose pioneering work is bearing rich fruit, was Chairman of a Natal Poetry Competition in three sections for different ages. Attached to the competition was an award of the junior Poet Laureateship, for which there were 300 entries. But although the award has been held over, the Committee felt that the organization of this competition was well worth the time and trouble.

Readings from T. S. Eliot, followed by a discussion, comprised the programme at a recent meeting of the Centre. Mr. Lawrence writes from 15 Overport Drive, Durban: 'We are consolidating our position and are full of hope for the future. Thank you for your kind interest and the Society here wishes you and Mr. Graddon and all the officers and members of the Poetry Society of Great Britain every good wish and continued success.' In return we send wishes for the future of the young winners of the Natal Poetry Competition, Jennifer McLaverty, aged fourteen, Joy Graham, aged fifteen, and Mrs. W. R. Smith, not forgetting Catherine Lubbe, who won the Afrikaans section for fourteen-year-olds.

It is interesting to note that Professor Durrant, head of the Department of English, Natal University, considers that just now 'the influence of "modern" verse is very evident, but the candidates apparently do not realize that the "free" verse of good modern poets is based on a thorough mastery of conventional verse-forms'.

SYDNEY (AUSTRALIA)

From Charles Higham, once of London, come felicitations. He has lectured for Miss Imogen Whyse's organization, which publishes 'a tiny journal', including 'poems fairly good, some very good', so that it is believed to be 'worth while'. Miss Whyse informs me that there are members in five states – 'not yet 200' – and one young poet has won recognition through 'our small group'. Modesty and enthusiasm make a happy blend.

Miss Whyse is troubled about the lower sterling value of the Australian pound. It causes difficulty for some members over there who find their subscriptions an exacting tax. Will Miss Whyse please be assured that the General Council of The Poetry Society in London will go thoroughly into the matter at an early date?

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HAMPSTEAD

The best attended occasion at this north-west London Centre in recent months was Robert Armstrong's admirable programme on the work of W. B. Yeats. Miss Sylvia Read, on another evening, read an attractive group of contemporary poems, and there have been some informal readings by members. These meetings are held on the second Monday of the month at 8 o'clock. Inquiries are welcomed by Miss Wendy Trewin, 15 Eldon Grove, Hampstead, N.W. 3.

BURGESS HILL

At Mrs. Lambert's restaurant, the Aspendell Private Hotel, 47 Church Road, Burgess Hill, the members of this excellently organized Centre hold meetings every second Saturday afternoon in the month (except in August) at 3 o'clock. The syllabus for this autumn includes programmes about Shakespeare and 'Poetry in Astronomy', and there are also a 'Reading Round' and a recital of her own poems by Miss Edith Clay. Visitors are welcomed, and inquiries will be answered by Miss K. G. Boycott, 'Twemlow', Jane Lane, Burgess Hill, Sussex.

WALTON AND WEYBRIDGE

Miss Clodagh Russell, of the 'Poetry in Pubs' venture during the war, starred in the latest syllabus of this mid-Surrey Centre. She gave a charming lecture on 'Light and Not So Light', and an enthusiastic debate among the mid-August audience rounded off a memorable evening. The poems read by Miss Russell were concerned with the sun and candlelight, lamplight and even electric light! There was a thrilling reading of D. H. Lawrence's 'The Bat', followed (or preceded) by auditions from Blake and Hardy, Walter de la Mare and Edith Sitwell. A traditional but little-known Scottish ballad was a most effective item.

A welcome member of the group was Miss Mary Storer, of Rome, sister of the late Edward Storer, who will be remembered by readers of *The Observer*. Miss Storer has promised to read some of her brother's poetry during the autumn. Mrs. Elsie Gittens, 28 Oatlands Drive, Weybridge, will answer all inquiries.

NORTHERN IRELAND

The season at this happily-progressive Centre has opened with the annual General Meeting which took place on 27th September, and was followed by an 'Anthology of Humour', arranged by Elizabeth Lindsay. The next gathering is dated 17th October, when Mr. J. Nelson Browne will give a talk on Byron. One of those ever-popular readings of plays – popular at all our Centres – is being prepared for 21st November, when Helen Shaw produces 'The First Born', by Christopher Fry. The year's syllabus ends on 12th December, when a recital of American poetry will be arranged by Miss Hettie Haddock, who, as we need hardly repeat, is the honorary secretary (18 Ashley Gardens, Lansdowne Road, Belfast).

Note—For Directory of Centres see previous issues.

TO MEMBERS WHO ARE AUTHORS

A small and permanent Exhibition of Books written by Members of The Poetry Society has now been arranged in the Hall at 33 Portman Square. All Members who are Authors are invited to deposit one copy of each or any of their works in poetry or relating to poetry with the General Secretary and Registrar (Mrs. Graddon) for inclusion in this Exhibition.

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